

Labour

Zionism

and

Revisionism

—Source Booklet



איחוד הבונים-דרור

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"IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD - ONE MUST ALSO UNDERSTAND IT"

What are the origins of the political conflicts currently raging among the Israeli public? How can a youth movement, dedicated to socialist Zionism participate responsibly in these conflicts? The material made available in this booklet is a modest contribution to the attempt to answer these two questions.

The purpose of this source-book and the seminar for which it was prepared is to acquaint the chaverim with some of the major issues that have been at the core of Zionist struggle for the past seventy years. It is, if one wishes, yet another journey in search of roots. What were the issues that divided the Zionist movement in the past? What are their relevance to a youth movement today?

We have chosen to concentrate on the views held by socialist Zionist leaders and their main political adversary - Zeev Jabotinsky and his Revisionist movement. The confrontation between socialist Zionism and Revisionism was much more than a conflict over political supremacy within the pre-state Zionist movement. These two movements represent two diametrically opposed views of the nature of Zionism, the political and social tactics to be employed in its realization and the social consequences for the Jewish people of the success of the Zionist revolution.

The material in the booklet has been organised in order to present a series of issues that have split the Zionist movement from the year of its inception to this very day. We will deal with the general question of means and ends and the political nature of Zionism. The conflict over settlement policy and security affairs is presented in the context of the events at Tel-Hai. The argument over the preconditions for the success of Zionism is introduced. There is much material on the complex of social issues that divided the yishuv during the 1920's and 1930's. A section of the booklet is devoted to the different military conceptions developed by the two movements, and the consequences on a wide range of social-political issues. The booklet presents a brief introduction to the Arab-Jewish conflict in the context of inter-Zionist politics.

In all these cases the material chosen reflects the actual positions expressed by the leaders of the movements at the time the issues arose. The sources used are diaries, letters, speeches and newspaper articles and essays. There is also some additional background material provided to help the chaverim gain insights into the "flavour" and "atmosphere" of the period. Although the booklet was prepared for specific use in a seminar framework, the material can be applied to a wide variety of movement formats.

Our hope is that a close reading and analysis of this material will provide an introduction to the history of the yishuv and will help clarify the ideological issues facing the youth movement today.

Machleket Chinuch

Ichud Habonim

BIOGRAPHIES

Herzl, Theodor

1860-1904

The founder of the Political Zionist Movement, and driving spirit in the creation of the World Zionist Organisation. He was born in Budapest to a bourgeois, assimilated Jewish family. He worked as a journalist for many European newspapers, and was also a minor playwright. The Dreyfus Affair in France, with all its anti-semitic implications, roused him from his relative indifference to the fate of the Jewish people, and in writing "The Jewish State" in 1896, he set out his solution to the Jewish problem. He founded "Die Welt", the Zionist weekly, and in August 1897, he organised the first Zionist Congress in Basle. He embarked on several diplomatic missions for the Zionist movement, and in 1903 proposed Uganda as a "temporary haven" for the Jews, which brought him into conflict with the East European Zionists. Herzl died in Vienna in 1904.

Achad Ha'am

1856-1927

A Jewish writer who was born in the Russian Ukraine. His family belonged to the rabbinical aristocracy of the Jewish ghetto. His real name was Asher Ginsberg and he took the name Achad Ha'am (One of the People) as he refused to consider himself a man of letters. Nevertheless, he worked as editor of the Hebrew monthly "Hashiloach", until he resigned, and went to become an official of the Wissotsky Tea Company. He settled in Palestine, in Tel Aviv, in 1921.

Most of his articles deal with the Hibbat Zion movement and the advocacy of cultural revival and modernization among the Jewish people, by an elite and not by mass action. Palestine, in his view, was to be the spiritual centre.

He clashed with Herzl's political Zionist approach, and took a minor part in Zionist public affairs; nevertheless, he greatly influenced many East European Zionists, who considered him their "secular rabbi."

Jabotinsky, Vladimir Ze'ev

1880-1940

The founder of the Revisionist Party. He was born in Odessa, and spent all of his adult years as a journalist, orator and Zionist organizer. He became an active Zionist in 1903, when he helped organise a Jewish self-defence corps in Odessa, in the face of a threatening pogrom.

He came to believe that Zionism could only mean a political struggle, which ultimately depended upon power. He was extremely skeptical of the British and their intent to help the Jews, and of the Arabs' acceptance of the aims of Zionism.

He was elected to the Zionist Executive in 1921, but was increasingly in conflict with the rest of the leadership, and in 1925, organised the Revisionist Party, which in 1933 left the Zionist organisation.

Trumpeldor, Josef

1880-1920

Soldier, symbol of pioneering and armed defence in Eretz Israel. Born in Russia. He believed in creating collective communes based on Tolstoyan principles, and this led to his concept of achieving Zionism through the establishment of a network of agricultural communes in Eretz Israel. He distinguished himself in the Russian army, achieving the rank of officer. In 1912 he went to Palestine to work as a farm labourer. At the outbreak of World War I, his efforts were essential in the formation of the Jewish Legion. Back in Russia, he founded and headed the Hechalutz movement, whose aim was to organise and prepare young Jews for aliyah and settlement on the land. He demanded military training for its members. In 1919, he returned to Palestine. In 1920 he was called to the defence of Tel-Hai, and died in the fighting there. Despite being a founder of Hechalutz, he became a symbol of Jewish courage and resolution, and the Revisionist youth movement, Betar (Brit Trumpeldor) was named after him.

Katznelson, Berl

1887-1944

Born in Russia, he became a central figure of Socialist-Zionism in Palestine. When he arrived in Palestine, at the age of 22, he worked as a day labourer on farms. He quickly acquired a reputation as organizer and leader among the workers' groups, and wrote frequently for the journals of the Labour Zionist movement. In 1918 he enlisted in the Jewish Legion. From 1920 until his death in 1944, he was one of the leading spokesmen, in Israel and abroad, of the ideology of Labour Zionism. He greatly influenced the cultural development of the country, by founding the newspaper 'Davar' and the 'Am Oved' publishing house. Katznelson stands out as a harmonizer of the old traditionalist emotion and the new Socialist Zionism.

Gordon, A.D. (Aaron David)

1856-1922

A Russian-Jewish clerk who, at the age of 47, immigrated to Palestine and soon became a central figure for the younger pioneers. He believed in the redemption of the land and of the Jewish people only by physical labour. A utopian and a mystic, he believed in the cosmic relationship between man and nature, and its particular expression for the Jewish people. He died in Degania in 1922.

Arlosoroff, Chaim

1899-1933

Zionist statesman and leader of the Zionist labour movement. Born in the Ukraine, and moved to Germany at an early age, he was an active Zionist from 1918. He tried to combine non-Marxist socialism with a practical approach to the problems of Jewish settlement in Palestine, and expressed the belief that co-operation between the Arab and Jewish national movements was possible. He settled in Palestine in 1924, and held many high political positions in the Yishuv. In the early 1930's, Arlosoroff began to doubt the British commitment to Zionism, and the feasibility of Arab-Jewish understanding in the foreseeable future. In June, 1933, he was assassinated while walking along the Tel-Aviv seashore. Two members of the Revisionists were charged with the murder, and were acquitted for lack of evidence. Ironically

despite his attempts to understand Arab political and national aspirations in Palestine, he may have met his death by Arab hands.

Begin, Menachem 1913 -

Present Prime Minister of Israel, and former commander of the Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel). Born in Brest-Litovsk, he graduated in law from Warsaw University. After a short association with Hashomer Hatzair, he joined Betar, and in 1938 became its leader in Poland. He was imprisoned by the Polish police, and later by the Soviet authorities. He arrived in Palestine in 1942, and soon became commander of the Etzel, which waged "armed warfare" against the British. In 1948 he founded the Herut party and became its leader. In the 1950's, he led the opposition to the rapprochement between Israel and West Germany. In 1977 he was elected Prime Minister of Israel. Despite his espousal of Greater Israel ideology, he signed the Peace Treaty with Egypt in March 1979, which returned Sinai to Egypt.

Ben-Gurion, David 1886-1973

The first Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and one of the prominent figures in the 'pre-state' Yishuv. Born as David Green in Plonsk, Poland, he became involved in Zionism very early. At the age of 17, he was co-founder of early Labour Zionist group, the Poale Zion. At the start of the second aliyah (1904) he came to Palestine as a farm labourer, and soon achieved organisational and political prominence. In 1915, exiled by the Turkish authority, he travelled to the United States, where for three years, he helped organise the American wing of Labour Zionism. In 1918, he organised and joined the American branch of the Jewish Legion. He served as general secretary of the Histadrut from 1921 - 1935, and as chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency from 1935 - 1948. Once the state was declared, he led it as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence through its early, dangerous days. A controversial leader, who was a source of inspiration to many, he took a strong line on the issue of aliyah, which led to friction with Diaspora Jewish leaders. During a stormy political career, he resigned as Prime Minister in 1953 and went to live in Kibbutz Sde Boker, calling on the youth of the nation to follow him to the Negev.

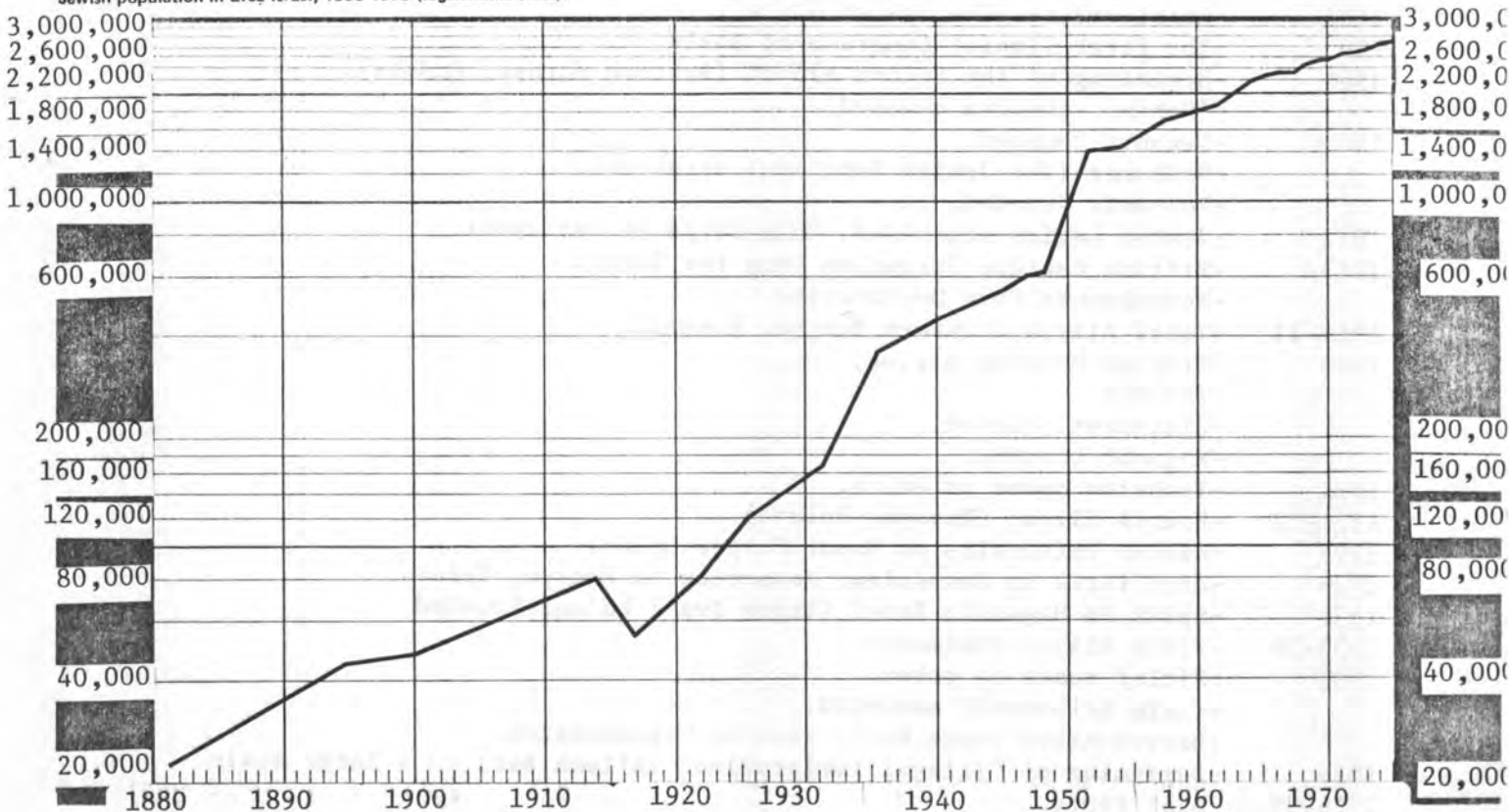
Allon, Yigal 1918-1980

Israel military commander and statesman. Born at Kfar Tavor, he became a founding member of Kibbutz Ginossar at the age of 19. He began his military career in the underground defence during the Arab riots of 1936-39, rapidly rose to officer rank, and eventually served as commander of the Palmach, and, during the War of Independence, commander of the southern front. From 1950 to 1960, Allon studied at Oxford and at the Hebrew University. He was first elected to Knesset in 1954, served as Minister of Labour from 1961-1968, and then as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education. After the Six-Day-War, he formulated the 'Allon Plan', an unofficial scheme for a solution to Israel's border problems, which outlines new border lines to combine "maximum security for the State of Israel with minimum of Arab population."

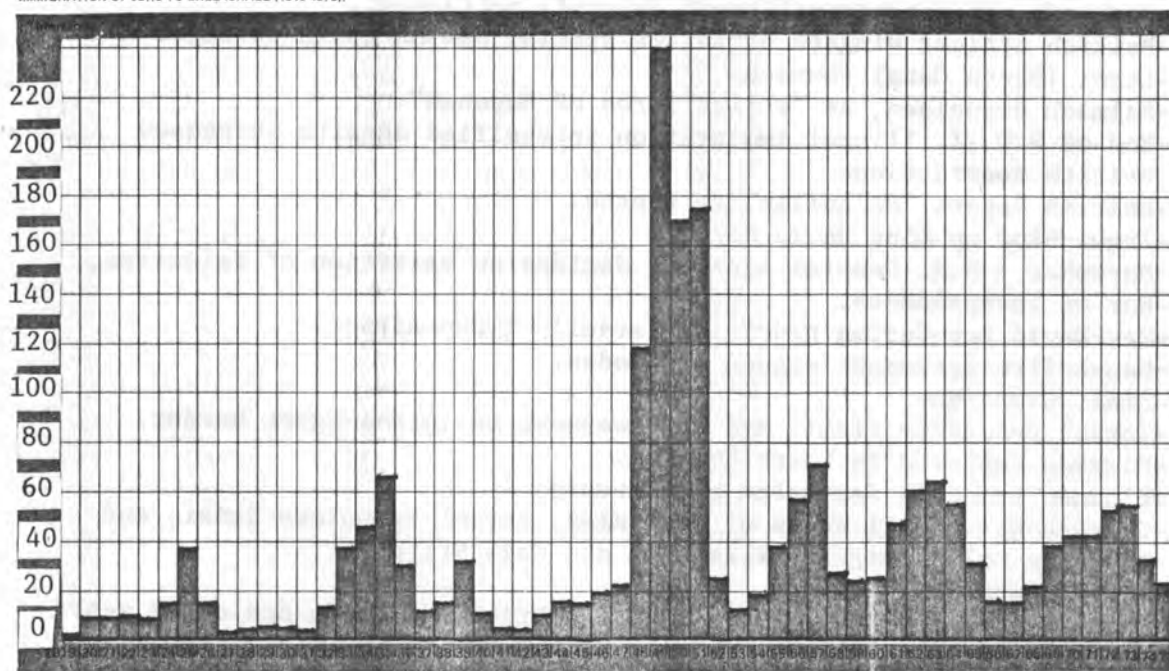
CHRONOLOGY

- 1882 -BILU (Immigration from Russia)
- 1896 -Herzl writes 'The Jewish State'.
- 1897 -The first Zionist Congress at Basle.
- 1904 -Beginning of the Second Aliyah (Eastern Europe, Russia).
-'Habima' theatre founded.
- 1909 -Degania founded.
-HaShomer (The Jewish Watchmen) organised.
-Tel-Aviv founded.
- 1915 -Jewish Legion organised. Mule Corps at Gallipoli.
- 1917 -British capture Jerusalem from the Turks.
-November-Balfour Declaration
- 1919-23 -Third Aliyah (Eastern Europe, Russia).
- 1920 -British Mandate begins.
-Tel-Hai.
-Histadrut founded.
-Haganah founded.
- 1924 -Technion opens in Haifa.
- 1924-32 -Fourth Aliyah (Europe, Poland).
- 1925 -Hebrew University on Mount Scopus opens.
- 1929 -Arab riots in Jerusalem. Massacres in Hebron, Tzfat.
- 1931 -Split in Haganah; Etzel (Irgun Zva'i Le'umi) founded
- 1933-39 -Fifth Aliyah (Germany).
- 1933 -Hitler comes to power.
-Chaim Arlosoroff murdered.
-Revisionists leave World Zionist Organisation.
- 1934 -Beginning of "illegal immigration" (Aliyah Bet) on a large scale.
- 1936-39 -Arab riots.
- 1937 -Haganah reunited.
-Stockade and watchtower(Chomah Umigdal) settlement.
- 1938 -British officer Wingate organises special Jewish units to fight Arabs.
- 1939 -Lechi (Stern Gang) founded.
- 1941 -Palmach organised, as "strike force of Haganah".
- 1945 -End of W.W.II. Illegal immigration intensified despite increased British restrictions.
- 1946 -British deport 'ma'apilim' to Cyprus.
-Irgun blow up King David Hotel.
- 1947 -November - U.N. General Assembly decides on partition of Palestine.
- 1947-48 -War of Independence.
- 1948 -May-David Ben-Gurion proclaims Israel's Independence.
- 1949 -Cease-fire agreement signed at Rhodes.
- 1956 -Sinai Campaign.
- 1957 -Israel evacuates Sinai, and UN observers on Israel-Egypt border.
- 1960 -Eichman captured in South America.
- 1961 -Eichman tried in Jerusalem and executed.
- 1967 -Six-Day-War. Unification of Jerusalem. Israel re-enters Sinai, and captures Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- 1973 -Yom-Kippur-War;
- 1977 -May - Likud government, with Begin as Prime Minister. End of 29 years of Labour rule.
- 1978 -September - Camp David Agreements.
- 1979 -March - Peace treaty with Egypt signed in Washington.

Jewish population in Erez Israel, 1880-1975 (logarithmic scale).



IMMIGRATION OF JEWS TO EREZ ISRAEL (1919-1975).



JEWISH POPULATION OF EREZ ISRAEL 1856-1975

1856	10,600
1882	24,000
1895	47,000
1914	85,000
1922	83,800
1931	174,600
1939	449,500
1948	758,700
1951	1,404,400
1961	1,981,700
1967	2,383,600
1972	2,723,600
1975	2,900,700

BASLE PROGRAMME

Original official programme of the Zionist Organization, named after the city where the First Zionist Congress was held (Aug. 1897), and where the programme was formulated and adopted.

"Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion by appropriate means of the settlement in Palestine of Jewish farmers, artisans and manufacturers.
2. The organization and unifying of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, both local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps toward obtaining the consent of governments, where necessary, in order to reach the goal of Zionism."



Theodor Herzl

H E R Z L

Excerpt from "The Jewish State"

The Jewish Question

No one can deny the gravity of the Jewish situation. Wherever they live in appreciable number, the Jews are persecuted in greater or lesser measure. Their equality before the law, granted by statute, has become practically a dead letter. They are debarred from filling even moderately high offices in the army, or in any public or private institutions. And attempts are being made to thrust them out of business also: "Don't buy from Jews!"

Attacks in parliaments, in assemblies, in the press, in the pulpit, in the street, on journeys - for example, their exclusion from certain hotels - even in places of recreation are increasing from day to day. The forms of persecution vary according to country and social circle. In Russia, special taxes are levied on Jewish villages; in Rumania, a few persons are put to death; in Germany, they get a good beating occasionally; in Austria, anti-Semites exercise their terrorism over all public life; in Algeria, there are travelling agitators; in Paris, the Jews are cut out of the so-called best social circles and excluded from clubs. The varieties of anti-Jewish expression are innumerable. But this is not the occasion to attempt the sorry catalogue of Jewish hardships. We shall not dwell on particular cases, however painful.

I do not aim to arouse sympathy on our behalf. All that is nonsense, as futile as it is dishonourable, I shall content myself with putting the following questions to the Jews: Is it not true that, in countries where we live in appreciable numbers, the position of Jewish lawyers, doctors, technicians, teachers, and employees of every description becomes daily more intolerable? Is it not true that the Jewish middle classes are seriously threatened? Is it not true that the passions of the mob are incited against our wealthy? I think that this pressure is everywhere present. In our upper economic classes it causes discomfort. In our middle classes, utter despair.

The fact of the matter is, everything tends to one and the same conclusion, which is expressed in the classic Berlin cry: "Juden 'raus!" (Out with the Jews!)

I shall now put the question in the briefest possible form: Shouldn't we "get out" at once, and if so, whither?

Or, may we remain, and if so, how long?

Excerpt from "The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem"
(1897)

"Some months have passed since the Zionist Congress, but its echoes are still reverberating in daily life and in the press. All kinds of gatherings - small and large, local and regional - are taking place. Since the delegates returned home, they have been calling public meetings and repeatedly regaling us with tales of the wonders that were enacted before their very eyes. The wretched, hungry public is listening, becoming ecstatic, and hoping for salvation... The Congress meant this: that in order to escape from all these troubles, it is necessary to establish a Jewish State.

There is no doubt that, even when the Jewish State is established, Jewish settlement will be able to advance only by small degrees, as permitted by the resources of the people themselves and by the progress of the economic development of the country. Meanwhile the natural increase of Jewish population both within the Palestinian settlement and in the Diaspora, will continue, with the inevitable result that, on the one hand, Palestine will have less and less room for the new immigrants, and on the other hand, despite continual emigration, the number of those remaining outside of Palestine will not be appreciably diminished. In his opening speech at the Congress, Dr. Herzl, wishing to demonstrate the superiority of his State idea to the previous form of Palestinian colonization, calculated that by the latter method it would take nine hundred years before all the Jews could be settled in their land. The members of the Congress applauded this as a conclusive argument. But it was a cheap victory. The Jewish State itself, do what it will, will find no way to make a more favourable calculation.

The truth is bitter, but with all its bitterness it is better than illusion. We must admit to ourselves that the "ingathering of the exiles" is unattainable by natural means. We may, by natural means, someday establish a Jewish State; it is possible that the Jews may increase and multiply within it until the "land is filled with them" - but even then the greater part of our people will remain scattered on foreign soils. "To gather our scattered ones from the four corners of the earth" (in the words of the Prayer Book) is impossible. Only religion, with its belief in a miraculous redemption, can promise such a consummation.

But if this is so, if the Jewish State, too, means not an "ingathering of the exiles" but the settlement of a small part of our people in Palestine, then how will this solve the material problems of the Jewish masses in the lands of the Diaspora?

The material problem will not be ended by the establishment of a Jewish State, and it is, indeed, beyond our power to solve it once and for all. (Even now there are various means at our disposal to alleviate this problem to a greater or lesser degree, e.g., by increasing the proportion of farmers and artisans among our people in all lands, etc.) Whether or not we create a Jewish State, the material situation of the Jews will always basically depend on the economic condition and the cultural level of the various nations among which we are dispersed.

Thus we are driven to the conclusion that the real and only basis of Zionism is to be found in another problem, the spiritual one...

It is not only the Jews who have come out of the ghetto; Judaism has come out too. For the Jews the exodus from the ghetto is confined to certain countries and is due to toleration; but Judaism has come out (or is coming out) of its own accord, wherever it has come into contact with modern culture. This contact with modern culture overturns the inner defences of Judaism, so that it can no longer remain isolated and live a life apart. The spirit of our people desires further development; it wants to absorb the basic elements of general culture which are reaching it from the outside world, to digest them and to make them a part of itself, as it has done before at various periods of its history. But the conditions of its life in exile are not suitable for such a task... So Judaism seeks to return to its historic center, where it will be able to live a life developing in a natural way, to bring its powers into play in every department of human culture, to broaden and perfect the national possessions which it has acquired up till now, and thus to contribute to the common stock of humanity, in the future as it has in the past, a great national culture, the fruit of the unhampered activity of a people living by the light of its own spirit. For this purpose Judaism can, for the present, content itself with little. It does not need an independent State, but only the creation in its native land of conditions favorable to its development: a good-sized settlement of Jews working without hindrance in every branch of civilization, from agriculture and handicrafts to science and literature.

This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in course of time the center of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable. Then, from this center, the spirit of Judaism will radiate to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, to inspire them with new life and to preserve the over-all unity of our people. When our national culture in Palestine has attained that level, we may be confident that it will produce men in the Land of Israel itself who will be able, at a favourable moment, to establish a State there - one which will be not merely a State of Jews but a really Jewish State.



Achad Ha'am

HERZL

Excerpt from a speech in St. Petersburg
(1902)

"It seems to me that there are those amongst us here who wish to repeat the old mistake that our brothers in Western Europe made. The Jews of Western Europe decided to place their fate in the hands of liberalism. They made a pact with liberalism and donated not only their money but also their lives to the cause. Masses of Jews sacrificed themselves for the cause of freedom in Western Europe - but to no avail. Fighting the battles of others leads always to the destruction of Jews and Judaism. We struggle for others but not for ourselves. But, for ourselves, there is only one path - Zionism.

Those, however, who seek to combine Zionism with other solutions to the Jewish problem fail to do justice to all. The time has come to clearly mark the lines between the various camps. Ignoring the real divisions amongst us will be fatal to all. We have a clearcut programme - the Basle programme - with which to approach the Zionist question. The programme has received support throughout the progressive world. But if we begin to confuse the issues and begin to include in Zionism things that aren't related to it, then we begin to lose that support. The world begins to wonder whether the Basle programme, whether Zionism itself, isn't a cover for some other, less admirable, idea.

Achad Ha'am's programme is the opposite of ours. He opposes the Jewish state as a solution for the Jewish people. According to him, the Jews will organize themselves in the Diaspora and there they will remain. I am not hurt by his criticism of my system. But I am shocked that there are Zionists who support his idea. I see that confusion reigns in our camp. Achad Ha'am himself is the only one who is loyal to his way. He doesn't belong to the Zionist Federation. But there are those who are confused. One cannot support Achad Ha'am and be a Zionist at the same time. We must differentiate between the two camps. Only then can each side get on with his work..."

MAX WEBER

On Ethics

We must be clear about the fact that all ethically oriented conduct may be guided by one of two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims: conduct can be oriented to an "ethic of ultimate ends" or to an "ethic of responsibility". This is not to say that an ethic of ultimate ends is identical with irresponsibility, or that an ethic of responsibility is identical with unprincipled opportunism. Naturally nobody says that. However, there is an abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of ultimate ends - that is, in religious terms, "the Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord" - and conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's actions.

You may demonstrate to a convinced revolutionary terrorist, believing in an ethic of ultimate ends, that his action will result in increasing the opportunities of reaction, in increasing the oppression of his class, and obstructing its ascent - and you will not make the slightest impression upon him. If an action of good intent leads to bad results, then, in the actor's eyes, not he but the world, or the stupidity of other men, or God's will who made them thus, is responsible for the evil.

However, a man who believes in an ethic of responsibility takes account of precisely the average deficiencies of people; as Fichte has correctly said, he does not even have the right to presuppose their goodness and perfection. He does not feel in a position to burden others with the results of his own actions so far as he was able to foresee them; he will say: these results are ascribed to my action. The believer in an ethic of ultimate ends feels "responsible" only for seeing to it that the flame of pure intentions is not squelched: for example, the flame of protesting against the injustice of the social order. To rekindle the flame ever anew is the purpose of his quite irrational deeds, judged in view of their possible success. They are acts that can and shall have only exemplary value.

But even herewith the problem is not yet exhausted. No ethics in the world can dodge the fact that in numerous instances the attainment of "good" ends is bound to the fact that one must be willing to pay the price of using morally dubious means or at least dangerous ones - and facing the possibility or even the probability of evil ramification. From no ethics in the world can it be concluded when and to what extent the ethically good purpose "justifies" the ethically dangerous means and ramifications..."

The Two Types of Politics (1929)

There are two kinds of politics (just as there are two kinds of revolutionism). One type can be called "unadulterated politics" - a kind of politics which is abstract, tends to degenerate into sterile rhetoric, and is unable to provide solutions to actual problems. This "unadulterated politics" promise, nevertheless, to solve such problems through one act of such grand proportions that reality will be overwhelmed and irreversibly altered. This type of politics depends considerably on concepts such as "prestige" and "honour". It is built around the cult of the leader and propelled through the extensive use of symbolism and exterior decorations. Politicians of this type disdain the quiet, steady, day-to-day grind of unpublicized activism and accomplishment. They are contemptuous of those who take the step-by-step approach. In this type of politics there is no room for colonization or settlement which require long periods of hard, steady work. In the Zionist context, this "unadulterated" politics promises salvation through the ultimate act of the establishment of a Jewish state. Most of its hopes are tied to the political calculations of the British empire. If we substitute "revolutionism" for "politics" and "social revolution with the aid of the USSR" for "creation of the Jewish state with the aid of the British empire", we will see that the concepts "unadulterated politics" and "truly revolutionary" are closely related.

But there is another kind of politics (just as there is another kind of revolutionism). This second type of politics is based on unending endeavour; on the step-by-step process of building stone by stone and planting dunam by dunam. This second kind of politics is suspicious and wary of declarations and diplomacy and unimpressed by external forms and symbols. On the other hand, this kind of politics depends absolutely on its form and content, on practical activities which are personally meaningful and binding on their participants. This "practical politics" strives to create a new and different reality based upon cooperation and solidarity - a reality in which every action is judged on the basis of its cooperative content; a reality of settlement and development. Through this kind of "practical" politics, a nation forms its future and the working class its hegemony. "Practical politics" is revolutionary in the sense that it seeks a total transformation of reality without worshipping the single grand revolutionary act. For the practitioners of this type of politics, the social-political revolution is, to use the classic term, the "midwife of history": the child itself is of ultimate importance.

There is a world of difference between these two kinds of politics (and revolutions). The difference is not a matter of goals but fundamental life styles and, therefore, the conflict between them is inevitable...

Berl KATZNELSON

Letter to a friend (M. Kushnir) about Jewish Legion

"...I would like you to understand my attitude about the legion as well as I understand yours. But I'm not sure that my explanation will make things any easier. When the war started, A.D. Gordon wrote that article about ethics and war, about the moral revival to be sought from the war. I couldn't control myself and my horror, and I told him so. The ideal that someone could pin his hopes and dreams on a war seemed to me an act of frivolity, if not worse. If someone had asked me if I was prepared to fight this war in order to receive our rights in Palestine - I wouldn't have accepted Palestine that way, even if our whole future depended upon it. And even now, after everything that has happened, I'm not at all proud that we may benefit in the end from this war. But history moves in strange ways.

The military side of the Legion doesn't interest me. I'm not a militarist, though I knew how to defend myself in Russia. But that isn't the case with this war and militarist ideology makes no impression on me. When the war started I wanted to be in Europe so that I could refuse conscription, refuse to participate. The false rumour that Leibniz had been executed for refusing to fight had been a moment of human victory for me. I saw it in terms of a holiday - the honour of mankind and the social-democratic movement had been saved. And now I'm a volunteer in the Jewish Legion.

Maybe the Legion is a disaster, but I'm used to searching for humanity in inhumanity, for sublimity in wretchedness, for the good in the bad. And in this disaster I see maybe a blessing in disguise. My whole being searches for it. I search for the movement of human revival, national humanist revival. We need this revival to cure the sterility of our lives. I'm not so naive that I think I'll live to see the total perfectibility of man. But I do believe in the possibility of a humanist movement that will improve both man and his society. And I won't ignore any spark, any hint of such a movement no matter where I find it. If I thought that there was a chance to build a great movement on behalf of the Zionist working society, in order to create a better man - I wouldn't need the Legion. But all these things will be created as a result of some great revival. Today there are only hints, scattered seeds seeking a fertile soil. And I believe that history moves in strange ways and that she has chosen this path in order to test us. Can I mock this movement? No. I'm not that kind of a man.

I'm not at all certain what will be the outcome of all this. But the chance, the possibilities are precious to me. I want the thousands of sparks that are being lit here and there to unite into one great flame..."

Rachel KATZNELSON

(wife of Z. Shazar)

"A WORD TO THE LEGIONNAIRES"- from THE PLOUGHWOMAN

The one thing which has prevented me from adopting an attitude of respect toward the Legion has been the question of murder.

But I have answered myself: Can it be shown by anyone that Moses, or Garibaldi, men who poured out oceans of blood, were less moral than the opponents of war? It seems to me that opposition to war springs from culture and from humanity, but not specifically from morality. And now I perceive that the real sin, the real evil, lies in the alien spirit which has been introduced in our midst ever since the Legion movement began.

At the conference of the women workers one comrade said, "Our graves will be sign-posts, pointing out the road of life and work to those who will come after us." And there were women there who found it in their hearts to applaud the speaker. How deeply it hurts me that such an attitude toward death should have developed among us. Wherever people applaud the mention of death, the ugliness of life has begun.

And I ask myself: Has anyone ever had the insolence to speak the following words to a Jewish worker of Palestine: "When you are following the plough, when you are doing guard duty at night, always remember, if a man falls on you and kills you, your name will be written into the memorials of your people, and those memorials will be translated into all the languages of mankind, and they will be read in every Jewish home." Yet why do people dare to say to the worker now: "If you fall in battle, there will be a marble memorial for you on Mount Zion, and your name will be engraved in books forever?" And why do the Jewish workers of Palestine accept these words calmly, as if their spirit were not alien to them? Is not this a new form of assimilation? I know that in the big world, outside there, such words carry great weight; they are forever on the lips of generals, but what have they to do with us?

It is difficult for me to speak now of Jabotinsky. He is dear to us because, like us, he has been reborn. He is near to us because he left the language and literature of strangers, learned Hebrew, and has the same feeling for poetry as we have. But he is alien to us in the matter of his outlook on work; he does not understand the affirmative values which are created by work. And it is hard for us when such as he brings this alien spirit among us. It is even hard to speak of it.

A few days ago there was a meeting in Jaffa. Jabotinsky spoke there, and he told the audience that once, when a superior officer had insulted him unjustly, he had answered: "Yes, sir." I went away from that meeting and heard young boys repeating, with blind enthusiasm: "Yes, sir!" I felt that these strange words were bringing poison into our blood.

Was it necessary to talk like that to grown-up, developed men before they went into the Legion? Would it not have been proper to speak in an absolutely contrary spirit - to say: "You are entering the Legion to do things which outrage your conscience, which will debase your soul; you will know that this is a sin, but you must take this sin upon yourself, together with all that is good,

together with all the anguish which it will bring you?"

"Yes, sir" is darkness out of which light will never be born.

And yet there are things which may fire the soul of the Jewish worker when he enters the Legion.

We are going out to conquer men in order that we may bring them into liberating work which will teach them responsibility, consciousness of duty and tolerance - work which makes them understand the meaning of reward and punishment, which replaces blind instinct with clear vision.

We are going out to create the Hebrew language, which shall take root in the hearts and mouths of our people, as it deserves to do.

We are going out to create a united Palestine.

Berl KATZNELSON

On Jewish Legion (from a letter to E. Golumb)

"...The creation of the Jewish Legion is one of the stations on the path of Jewish national revival - as is immigration, the revival of the Hebrew language, the return to labour. All these began with small cells - weak and often unsuccessful attempts. Through the act of trying comes strength and success. And there is the hope that all these will cease one day to be caricatures. The movement of Jewish self-defense was born in the pogrom of Kishenev. But as weak and hesitant as it was, the movement gave us some national pride. The continuation of the movement was here in the creation of HaShomer. And now, today, the thing takes on a new form. There will be problems and dangers here, but does that mean we shouldn't try? The attempt will strengthen us, will lead to results we can't envision as of now.

The Jewish Legion will make the Jewish people begin to think of something new: a world Jewish army. This is no more of a fantasia than the idea of a Jewish state. The first Hebrew speakers seemed strange, fantastic to their comrades. So did the first workers and shomrim. This strangeness will add strength to our actions... The Jewish Legion must open Palestine for the new pioneers. The Legion will be the real, living, human connection during wartime between ourselves and the Diaspora..."

Zeev JABOTINSKY

on Pre-conditions for Zionism

..."The creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine" is empty rhetoric if we don't appear before the nations of the world and demand our rights. They promised us a "National Home", now they must give us the chance to build that home. If I promise someone the use of my house, the first thing I have to do is give him the key to the door. But all this is known to the British, and yet we have to explain such things to Britian. She, who colonized entire continents, needs an explanation? They know what the pre-condition is: power and government. Without money there is no investment. Without a government, there can be no colonization...

Palestine Council, 1919

...Colonization cannot take place without the proper political pre-conditions. There is a difference between colonization politics and colonization. The political programme is needed to create the forms of colonization; to convince the world that we are serious and can achieve what we proclaim. A model of the Eifel Tower can be built with two hands and a hammer. But colonization, that is, the creation of a new state through migration and absorption - this national task can only be achieved through national state means. The Eifel Tower itself cannot be built with two hands and a hammer. The difference is not only qunan- titative, it is qualitative. The whole system must be political. We realize that the economic conditions are paramount for the success of a colonization programme. But the political conditions are a pre-condition for success...

Zionist Congress, 1925

The Aims of Zionism (1926)

Statesmanship means, first of all, clear thinking. Zionist statesmanship, there- fore, implies the duty to formulate, as exactly as possible, the practical object of Zionism and then to consider what are the ways and means which can bring about the realization of the object.

What is the practical object of Zionism? To say we want to create "a national home" is not enough, as the term "national home" has no fixed meaning...

The only precise way of describing our object is this: we want to create a Jewish majority in Palestine. This does not mean that we intend to rule over our nei- bours but we want Zion to become a country where the Jew can no longer be "overruled"...

Now the creation of a majority is a question of numbers which can be easily cal- culated. We shall have to introduce into Palestine at least one million immigrants

or, on the average, 40,000 per year for 25 consecutive years.

This figure is the basis for all the Revisionist demands. It is clear that, under ordinary conditions, a country of Palestine's size and resources would hardly be considered able to absorb such an influx of immigrants... Obviously, then, quite special measures of an exceptional character will have to be taken in order to adapt Palestine for the task of absorbing, year in and year out, an immigration of that magnitude.

These measures are twofold: first, intensive importation of capital, secondly - and equally as important - active cooperation of the government expressing itself in a series of legislative acts which will accelerate the development of the country's resources. The most important of these legislative acts are, naturally, an agrarian reform creating a land reserve of cheap land and a tariff reform protecting local industries from overwhelming foreign competition.

All this hinges, of course, on the fundamental question of whether we want to become a majority. If we do, then all the above demands, and many others, become indispensable. But, if majority is not our object, then, we have no basis for insisting on any such measures; then we must logically submit to the proposition that Jewish immigration should be strictly limited...



Ze'ev Jabotinsky

We seek to return to the land, to nature, to a natural life of independence and creativity. We seek to return to labour. There is no need to explain to you, who are prepared to give your lives and souls, how difficult this task is. Desire and devotion to the cause are not enough however. They will not turn a non-worker into a worker, a white collar worker into a manual laborer, a child of an urban culture into a child of the fields, of nature. What is required is more than physical exertion. What is required is spiritual exertion as well. This spiritual exertion must be unceasing. It will be difficult. This is the real basic revolution, the spiritual revolution. This spiritual revolution is no less important than the revolution in external social forms and social habits. And this revolution cannot be measured in time as if one could say that the revolution is accomplished. Now the new world begins. No, this revolution will be a permanent revolution for all times. This revolution is a revolution of self education. This process of education is no less important than the idea of labour itself. This process of education, if properly understood, will be the creative source of our new lives. And it is clear that all our moments of despair and anguish which inevitably follow the periods of joy and hope - all this is a result of our not sufficiently understanding the process of education, this permanent revolution.

* * * * *

There is only one way that can lead to our renaissance - the way of manual labour, of mobilizing all of our national energies, of absolute and sacrificial devotion to our ideal and our task. Not even by thousands of title deeds can national assets be acquired, for whatever title deeds we do possess to land in Palestine have so far not given us real title to our country. Truth to tell, we have as yet no national assets, because our people has not yet paid the price for them. A people can acquire its land only by its own effort, by realizing the potentialities of its own body and its soul, by unfolding and revealing its inner self. This is a two-sided transaction, but the people comes first - the people comes before the land. But a parasitical people is not a living people. Our people can be brought to life only if each one of us recreates himself through labour and a life close to nature. Should he fall short of achieving this self-rehabilitation, the next generation, or the one thereafter, will complete the process. This is how we can, in time, have good farmers, good labourers, good Jews, and good human beings. As for petty trading and all that goes with it, the coming generations will pursue the same road even more vigorously.



A.D. Gordon

Berl KATZNELSON

In The Future (1918)



"...An examination of our tasks for the future is now required. The present moment, decisive as it probably is in political-Zionist terms, will decide the form of the national renaissance.

There are many paths available in order to build the new Jewish society of the future. But the paths are different and no one can avoid choosing one. The attempt not to choose is in itself a choice. And does anyone, even within the Zionist movement, have the same moral right, the same spiritual preparation to choose the path, as those people for whom the choice is a matter of their daily life, whose future is being created? This is the right of the working class - this is its obligation as well.

The working man plays a special role in the national redemption. Realizing his dreams is his life's work. His labour, his past, his experiences, even his failure, are the rungs upon which he climbs and from which he views his future, the future of his people. Labour is the source of his needs and thoughts. The act of labour leads to social activism. And that activism enriches the life of labour in return. Individual and social consciousness involve more than criticism. They include belief and confidence, an appreciation of desires and strengths. We never cease to criticize and analyze ourselves. Our demands of ourselves are never satisfied. We are never content with our achievements, we always demand more. But no matter what we may say, no matter how much we may criticize our weaknesses and failures, we must never forget our achievement. We are realizing Zionism in our individual lives. Our practical, daily acts of halutzit are the foundation for the creation of a free Jewish workers society. That is our fate. And that fate gives us strength and guides us through crises... Jewish labour is a fact. And this initial victory is the cornerstone of our future. The economic position of the Jewish worker does not depend, of course, only on his own desires and strength, but also on the general economic condition of the society. And that condition requires other forces in addition. But the worker has created a place for himself. He exists as an entity that cannot be erased. Jewish labour infused new blood into the yishuv. Jewish labour has created a web of social, economic, cultural and political realities, cooperative endeavours of all kinds, kibbutzim, moshavim, educational facilities and agricultural experience, organs of self defense, a workers press, the Histadrut and its institutions and the whole vibrant environment surrounding all these. And all these are the embryo of a future society. The internal strength that the working class has developed during this creative process is the source of its external strength, the source of its influence in the yishuv..."

On Zionism and Social Issues

As long as the process of building the Jewish state continues, we see no special importance or significance in the concepts "capitalist" or "worker". Both these types are the raw materials needed to construct the state. Their individual or class interests, good fortune, problems, success and failures are of interest to the Zionist cause only in so far as they contribute or detract from the efforts to create a Jewish majority in Palestine. All human desires, be they individual or collective, all social, cultural, religious and other impulses - all these are irrelevant in the face of the single important task of state-building... Our task is to insure that all those class feelings of pride or rebellion or fervour do not interfere, God forbid, with the efforts to increase the Jewish population in Palestine. Political Zionism does not seek to "eliminate" class feelings; rather, it seeks to "neutralize" them, to turn them into something which cannot endanger or influence the economic reality of Palestine until after the Jewish majority has been ensured...



Redeeming the land by labour

Labour and Counter-Revolution

1978

At first there was only a vision, a dream. In fact, if one measures the success of national renaissance movements, then Israel is most certainly a dream that has been realized. Like most dreams, however, something happened in the process of realization. The dream that was Israel has lost something. Only thirty years have passed, but we're already paunchy, tired. To many it seems as if our entire national life is dedicated to the acquisition of the easy chair and the quiet life: the symbols of petty-bourgeois respectability. We have moved with amazing speed away from the original vision, the dream of the socialist Zionist movement. Nachum Syrkin once wrote: "The actual realization of Zionism will mean the creation of an ever more real socialist utopia." The "socialists" amongst us will say that what has actually happened is quite natural. The attempt to build a utopia will always lead to disappointment. But I tend to agree with the notion that there is nothing more realistic than utopia. The "realists" are always in danger of lapsing into sterile pragmatism or, what is worse, of educating an entire generation towards conformism and conservatism in thought and action. The realists always forget that the quest for the impossible is what distinguishes humanity, and that what seemed impossible just yesterday is fact today.

I often ask myself what it is that enabled the pioneers to build what they did and what enabled their successors to continue in their path, establishing and expanding their successes while adapting to new conditions and a different era. The answer is quite simple: labour. Both physical and intellectual labour. Labour is an integrative process. Human labour is not the same as the instinctive physical activity going on in an ant colony. Human labour is an expression of man's efforts to improve his individual and collective existence. The fruit of human labour is the entire physical world in which we live. But the source of that world is in the ideals of creation, creativity, culture and art. In short, any labour, even that which is designed to produce material products only, has moral value, and intellectual creativity, be it practical or not, is one of the characteristics of the working man. Another characteristic is pride - pride in his achievements and creativity which are no less important to a working man than the salary or wages he receives. There is no contradiction between education and physical labour. A progressive society must strive to ensure that its intellectuals do their share of the physical labour needed and that the workers are educated and knowledgeable in all areas of science and culture.

When I speak about labour, I mean all work in the productive sphere, be it industry, vital services or intellectual labour. All these are vital to the increasing comfort and welfare of humanity. The working community extends from the young apprentice on the factory line to the upper echelons of the scientific community in the most modern of laboratories. Berl Katznelson coined the phrase: "a working people". A working people is equally competent with the hoe and the pen and, when necessary, the gun. A working people is equally comfortable in the laboratory, the fields, the university classroom, the theatre. Israel will be Jewish only so long as the Jews here will be a working people. Should they cease to be so, then our very right to be in this land comes into question.

I don't mean that only the fate of the Galil or Negev is at stake. In both these areas there is a burning need for more Jews who will work and create and build.

I mean that the whole world outlook of our youth and the nature of the Jewish society he will develop are at stake. Not only we determine the future of the Jewish state. The Arab child of six who collects tomatoes under the watchful stare of the young son of his Jewish employer - the child too determines the fate of the Jewish state.

The writing is on the wall even if there are those who refuse to read it. Nothing will save us except a courageous reexamination of all our national and social values. We need radically different conceptions of how to build our social order. Without these changes no new start will be made. As long as speculators' profits are many times greater than a working man's wages, and the income from financial speculation is greater than the income from investment in industrial production, there is no chance to heal the sick Israeli society. Laissez-faire social doctrines are hurting the working man's standard of living, but also are destroying the dignity of labour itself.

This anti-Zionist counter-revolution began with the establishment of the State in 1948, when too many thought that the goals of Zionism had been realized. The counter-revolution reached its peak with the political upheaval in 1977, which lent it legitimacy. The line that always divided the socialist Zionist camp from the petty-bourgeois, nationalist mystic camp was this very question - is the State the goal and final purpose of the Zionist movement, or is it only an important tool in the permanent revolution in Jewish life which is the basis of the socialist Zionist camp?

The road to victory against the counter-revolution is not an easy one. And let no one delude himself that the failures of the present regime will be enough to guarantee that we regain hegemony in this land. We need to organize our forces and to depend on the care of the working people in this country - the working settlements, both kibbutzim and moshavim. They must break out of their isolationism and return to the centre stage of political and social activism, in order to save themselves, but also the great ideals of socialist Zionism, of which they are the prime expression. We have a dual task - to revitalize the dream and to ensure its realization. Our success in this dual task will decide the fate of the working community and the Jewish people as a whole.

If this is utopia - then I am a utopian.

TEL - HAI

Background Material

On September 10, 1919, Lloyd George conferred with his advisors, including General Allenby, in a villa in the French village of Dueville. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the question of the borders of the mandate in Palestine and the withdrawal of British forces from these areas which were to fall under French supervision. Zionist leaders were not invited to this conference. Lloyd George had already received a memorandum from Weizman on the border question as well as a proposal from Lord Balfour. The Prime Minister commented that the proposal to include Mt. Hermon within the borders of Palestine seemed to him to be going too far. The meeting soon developed into an argument over the borders of Solomon's biblical kingdom. A message was dispatched to London ordering delivery to Dueville of an historical Atlas and a large map marked with the borders agreed upon in the Sykes-Picot agreement. The conference eventually reached the conclusion that the border should run along the southern bank of the Litani River from its mouth in the west to the Banias springs in the east. The "Dueville line" meant that the Litani River and its water sources as well as Mt. Hermon would be outside the borders of the British mandate in Palestine.

When Weizman was informed of the decision, he requested an immediate audience with Lloyd George. The request was denied. The British told the Zionist leaders that there was no need to fear the latest proposal. In any case there was no intention to make a final decision, and Lloyd George continued to support the position that Palestine reached from "Dan to Beersheva".

On September 13th Weizman learned that the entire question had been referred to a joint military committee. That same day he met with Allenby. Weizman left the meeting with the feeling that strategic considerations would lead the British to set the border north of the Litani River.

A few weeks later Allenby met with the French general, Guereaux, in order to reach a final decision. Allenby's instructions were clear: to concede whatever was necessary in order to ensure that the British interest in Syria was maintained. And so Allenby agreed to a line similar to the border proposed by Sykes-Picot (in which the entire upper Galilee was removed from British control). This was a greater concession than that proposed at Deuville. The proposed border was not actually marked out even on maps. Allenby told Guereaux that his proposal was for a temporary military agreement which could be changed when the final political agreement over Palestine was concluded.

As a result of the Allenby-Guereaux agreement, the British withdrew their forces from parts of northern Palestine in November 1919. The withdrawal included the eastern part of the upper Galilee. As far as the British were concerned, any events that would occur north of the new line were, from now on, a French problem. The Zionist Executive urgently requested clarification of the fate of the Jewish settlements now left outside of the mandate borders. The British referred the Executive to General Guereaux's headquarters in Beirut.

The French had few forces in the area, most of whom were concentrated in Beirut and Tyre. French patrols reached eastwards to Hatzebin and Nabatia but the four

Jewish settlements just to the east were in a sort of no-man's land. The settlers watched the Beduin tribes returning with their booty after raiding and pillaging the Christian villages to the west. First came the Beduin cavalry; after them the stolen flocks and in the rear their women carrying the spoils - oil, clothes, carpets, blankets. The entire Moslem population of the region seemed to be participating in the attacks against the Christians and in the revolt against the French. Only the Druze community carefully refrained from joining the pillagers.

The Beduin raiders told the Jewish settlers that they were safe as long as they didn't collaborate with the French or Christian villages. The Christian villages in the region were sacked and burned one after another. The French military forces sent to protect the Christians usually fled for their lives at the first sight of Beduin horsemen. An attempt by the French to mount a punitive raid against the Beduin failed when most of the troops (of Algerian and Tunisian descent) openly supported the Beduin tribes. Despite their weakness (fourteen settlers in Hamara and twenty each in Kfar Giladi and Tel-Hai) the Jewish settlements were not harmed during these raids. The settlers told the Beduin leaders and the officers of Feisal's army who arrived to direct the attacks against the French, that their intention was to remain strictly neutral in the war between the Moslems and the French. The Jews were interested only in working their land and protecting their lives and property.

Nevertheless, there were clashes between Beduin raiders and the settlers at Tel Hai. On December 16, some forty Beduins approached the settlement demanding food and shelter. After a short time they withdrew. The next day there was a more serious clash. Four Jews from "HaShomer" set out from Tiberias toward Tel Hai to gather information about the security problems of the Jewish settlements. Nachum Horowitz was one of them and this is his story:

"We heard the bullets shrieking over our heads. Nachmani (the leader of the party) cried out - those were meant for us!! We scattered and left the path and began galloping across the fields. In the distance we saw the walls of Tel Hai. Suddenly Arie Abramson fell as his horse was shot. But he got up immediately and I helped him up behind me on my horse. I immediately felt my own horse begin to limp. She too had been wounded. In another moment I felt a strange heat in my stomach. Later I realized that I too had been hit by a bullet. We continued on toward Tel Hai. All around us were Beduin on foot and on horseback trying to catch us. But we didn't lose our heads and due to the speed of our horses we just managed to reach the settlement and slip through the gate. Soon the settlement was surrounded by Beduin. They demanded that the "French spies" be handed over to them. Inside the walls there was a swift consultation. Should we open fire on them? We decided not to open fire yet, mainly for lack of ammunition. The Arabs began to bang on the gate. We decided to prevent their entrance at any price. The Arabs demanded to enter in order to seek the French. We answered that we would come outside instead. We had decided that it would be better to have the confrontation outside the settlement walls. We all went out, each with his pistol in his hand, his finger on the trigger. One of the men from Tel Hai began to explain that we were Jews, not French soldiers. Some of the Beduin weren't convinced, and began to threaten that they would shoot. At last one of the Beduin recognized us and testified that we were indeed from Tiberias and not French spies. Soon after the Arabs withdrew...

The French forces in the area began a slow withdrawal. On January 26 the last French soldier left Metulla. Trumpeldor feared that the Beduin would see the

withdrawal from Metulla as a great victory. The result, he thought, might be an increase in attacks on Kfar Giladi and Tel-Hai. Trumpeldor decided to tour the area and check out the situation in Metulla. He left orders to continue work in the fields at Tel Hai, and set out for Metulla. His visit confirmed the report that the French had withdrawn. Only 10 farmers were left in the village and they lived in constant fear for their lives and property. Upon Trumpeldor's return to Tel-Hai, a violent argument began. Should the settlers help the small band of farmers in Metulla or should they be abandoned to their fate? The extremists described Metulla as a village of parasites and speculators who lived off Arab labour. In their view it would be best if that Metulla was destroyed in order to refound the settlement on the foundation of Jewish labour. The majority, on the other hand, supported the idea of aiding the farmers. Trumpeldor notes in his diary on January 28th, that support was coming to Metulla for two reasons: one doesn't exploit an hour of danger in order to settle grievances and feuds, and also it was unthinkable that the settlers at Tel-Hai would lend a hand to the abandonment of another Jewish settlement and the subsequent transference of the Palestine border south of the settlements. But the defense of Metulla required another fifty people and no one had any idea where they could be found...

Trumpeldor's fears concerning increased Arab pressure on the Jewish settlements was well founded. Within weeks the settlement at Tel-Hai faced the supreme test:

One day I was lying in bed in Kfar Giladi, tired and wet. The chaverim had covered me with all of their dry coats. Suddenly a messenger from Tel-Hai arrived. He brought news that Kamal el Hussein and four other Arab officers had arrived, fully armed and had demanded entrance in order to search for French spies. I got up and set for Tel-Hai accompanied by five other chaverim. We took as much ammunition as we could as well as several grenades. Two Arab scouts blocked our entrance into Tel-Hai. We ordered them to proceed with us to Kamal. At first they resisted, but when they saw that we meant business, they turned and led the way. When we entered Tel-Hai, we found the Arabs sitting opposite the gate. The table had been moved in order to allow free entrance and exit.

Upon entering the gate, we replaced the table in order to block the exit. They looked at us for a moment and then we began the discussion with the traditional greetings and salutations. Kamal quickly lost his patience.

"You're traitors who are concealing French spies! Where is the friendship and love of the Homeland?"

"We are neutral in this struggle between you and the French. Between us is a relationship of friendly neighbours, and we intend to maintain the relationship."

"That means that you allow French in here?"

"Of course. If they come in peace we don't open fire on them."

"I understand that you mean that there are French here at this moment. They are spying on us!"

"No, we aren't concealing anyone. We don't allow them to hide here just as we wouldn't allow you to hide here if you wanted."

"We want to check - to be sure."

"No! We won't allow any searches. You'll have to believe us."

"We just want to see for ourselves."

"No! No searches!"

"You want to fight us?"

"We don't want to fight anyone. We want to stay neutral."

"If you aren't against us - you must help us. You must close your home to the French and if they do come - you must inform us and we will come to help you. If you don't do this - then you are our enemies."

"We aren't enemies. We've always been good neighbours and we'll continue to be so."

"No - that isn't the way. If you're not with us - then you're against us."

"We won't change our minds."

"That's your final answer?" shouted Kamal.

"Our final answer," I replied...

THE POLITICAL VIEWS ON
TEL-HAI

Within the yishuv and its institutions, there was disagreement over the question of whether to defend the upper Galilee and the settlements or whether it would be wiser to retreat, at least temporarily. The workers' press - *Kontress* and *HaPoel Hatzair* - as well as certain bourgeois writers such as M. Smilanski, insisted that the settlements must be defended at all cost. The rest of the community was more hesitant. There were doubts as to the ability of the yishuv to defend the settlements as well as disagreement over the very necessity of doing so. Some argued that reinforcing the settlements would only anger the Arabs. Amongst the bourgeoisie there were those who sternly reproached the workers movement for having settled the area in the first place without the advice or support of the Council.

This was not an academic argument. The differences of opinion prevented the accumulation of funds necessary for aiding the settlements. The community funds were limited; the arguments only made matters worse. And besides the primary question of defense or retreat there was another secondary question: who was to finance the defense program? Should the funds come from the Council or ICA (Jewish Settlement Association)? Should budgets be applied to work or defense?

Jabotinsky's Position:

"I think that all those presently in the French sector should retreat and return to Palestine. We aren't capable of defending these points by ourselves. I beseech you - as their comrades - to tell the young defenders the bitter truth and maybe we'll be able to save something. You must tell your comrades: Come back and build here what is possible...The position we must defend is not Metulla or Tel-Hai - it is the entire northern Galilee. Our political demands are known to the entire world: a united Palestine under British control. British control - not because we are British patriots or British imperialists, but because British control is, in our view, the best guarantee of the future of Palestine. The armed robbery and pillage occurring outside the British sector is the best proof of the justice of our demand..."

Katznelson's Positions:

"Our path is clear. We are sincere believers - not demonstrators. We didn't intend to "demonstrate" when we joined the Legion, nor when we searched for work under any conditions nor when we go out to guard at night. No officers or commanders order us to go. And when one of us is killed - it isn't easy. Because the dead man wasn't some factor is some political equation or maneuver - he was one of us - our flesh and blood. We want to live and we know what to expect when we go there - especially after your deceit. We go because it is our duty to do so. Because our lives and our dreams of the honour of the yishuv are at stake - not some piece of land. The only way to prove our rights on this land - to prove the unity of Rosh Pina and Metulla - is to stand firm without looking back.

It isn't easy to speak in this room. I don't want to speak about the real issues.

The questions that Jabotinsky raised are important. Amongst the defenders themselves there are those who think that we aren't capable of holding out there. You must face the fact that small groups of youth have been defending their settlements for over two months now. Maybe Jabotinsky is right - maybe we won't win. Maybe Jabotinsky is right when he figures that we won't succeed - but in any struggle it's easier to predict defeat and harder to guarantee victory... This is an old argument and logic won't decide it. There is a line of thought that says almost in advance - retreat! And there are those who insist upon holding out until the very last moment because maybe then the impossible will suddenly become possible."

Dr. Mosinson's Position:

Dr. Mosinson (the Principal of the Herzilia School) admitted that he has no special knowledge of the events and can only express his feelings:

"We aren't ready for war. If we send people there and there isn't work for them, they'll start to fight... If you (the workers movement) want help from the Yishuv, you have to ask first. But no! You went ahead on your own and didn't ask anyone..."

Mosinson's wrath was directed at the workers movements whose actions in the north threatened the entire yishuv. He complained especially about the workers who came to recruit high school students and gave them weapons. He suggested at the end, two proposals: not to retreat from the settlements but not to send people off to war.

M. Shinkin's Position:

M. Shinkin (a member of the Council) expressed his sorrow that the meeting had not heard about the events in the Galil from the people who actually lived there. Shinkin's proposals: defense against pillagers without taking any actions which could be interpreted as an act of war against the Arabs. The Council should demand from France that she defend the settlements and from Britain that she ease her restrictions on movement toward the settlements.

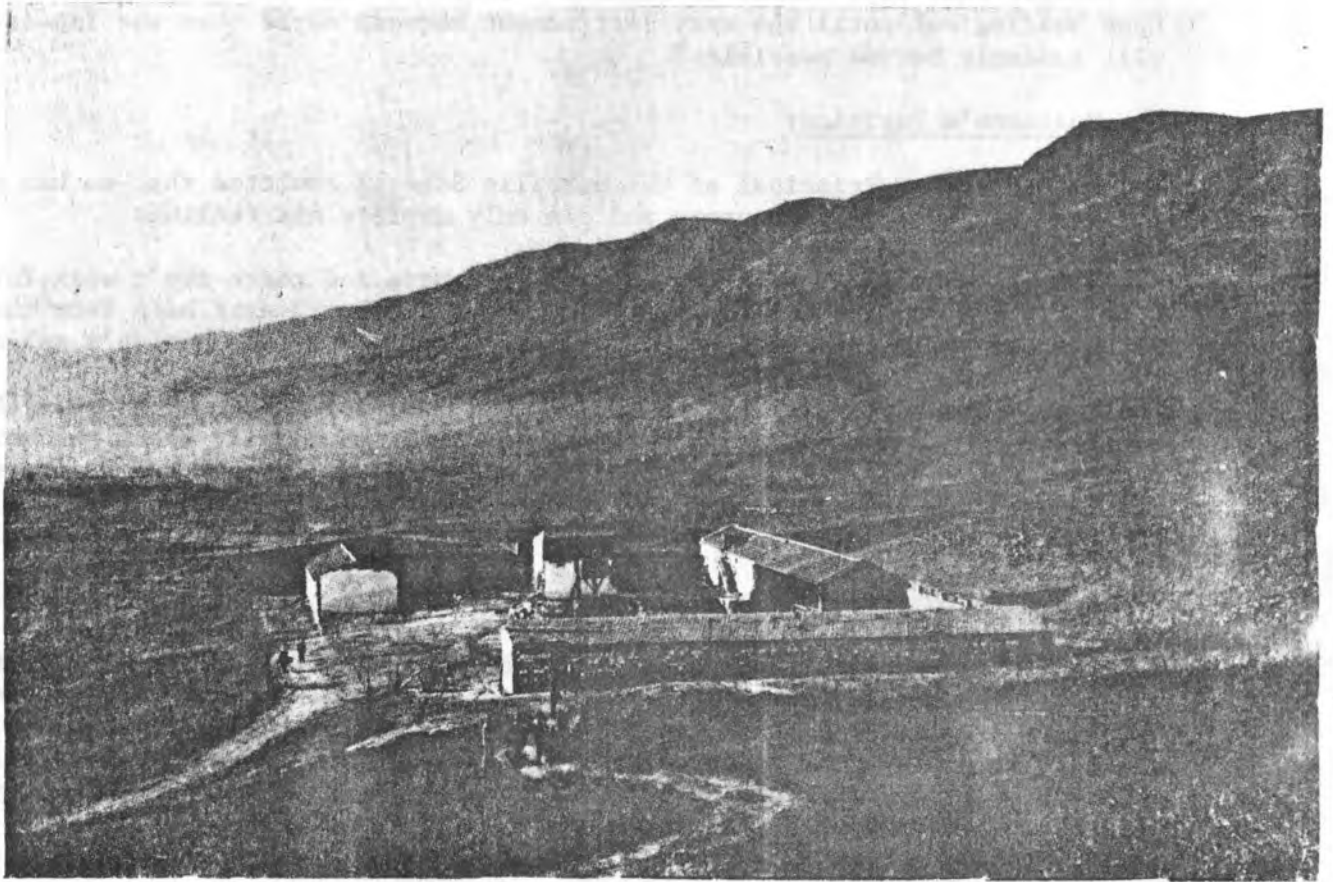
Ben-Gurion's Position:

"Ussishkin was correct when he said that this is the most important question - the Arab question. That this is a diplomatic problem. But the issue is neither Arab or diplomatic. The issue is Zionist. Because the entire Galil is in danger - not only the few settlements there. There is a danger that the entire Galil will be lost to the Jewish people. Therefore we believe that we have to defend every place where there are Jewish workers. If we flee from pillagers, we'll have to abandon not only the upper Galil, but all of Palestine. We are defending our land. We don't want to interfere in the war between two nations. Several hundred people can defend our settlements in the Galil - and in so doing will defend our political demands being made in Europe. Because of our actions, our leaders will be able to make demands in this area."

Tabenkin's Position:

"We must note the fact that the Arabs are hostile towards us. The Arab villagers see us as an intruder, an invader. And we are defending ourselves against their

hatred. The Arabs must understand that we will defend ourselves, that nothing can be taken from us by force. For the Jews of Palestine, the issues are clear. The defense of the Galil is not a local affair; it has repercussions for all of Palestine. If we fail there - we will fail everywhere... I think that it requires courage to abandon Kfar Giladi and Tel-Hai - because this will be only the first retreat."



Tel-Hai

Moshe SMILANSKI

On Jewish Labour

1934

Our opinion has always been that the demand for the exclusive use of Jewish labour is anti-Zionist because it is not necessary and not practical.

We cannot make an artificial distinction between ourselves and the Arabs. Fate has it that two peoples will live side by side in this land. Our responsibility is to bring the two nations closer together, not to force them apart. The practical meaning of exclusive Jewish labour is boycott, and boycott breeds boycott.

We can't afford to create too large a difference in costs of production between ourselves and the Arab producers. We can't afford to undermine our own competitive position in the market. Any monopoly causes costs of production to rise and endangers competitive prices. The demand for the exclusive use of Jewish labour is, in effect, the demand for monopolistic conditions. And in this case, monopoly injures both sides. On the one hand, our costs of production increase and on the other hand, the means of production (i.e. source of employment) remain stagnant. Let us not forget that the Jewish worker is not the best. The Jewish lad isn't used to physical work. The lack of competition for employment insures that he will never improve.

We can't endanger our economic interests. Agriculture is based on permanent labour and seasonal work. The Jewish working class here has not in the past, and will not in the future, be able to answer the needs of seasonal work. The demand for exclusive Jewish labour endangers the seasonal work. Not even mass immigration can insure the workers needed during the busy season. It is during the busy season that we especially need the experienced workers.

It is false to assume that the exclusive use of Jewish labour is necessary in order to provide the basis for Jewish immigration. The most important factor attracting immigration is the overall economic condition of the yishuv and not that factor which endangers the economic condition. In the past, large settlements which employed a mixed work force were those settlements which afforded the best chance for absorption of immigrants, and this situation is also true today. If their economic strength is diminished, then their ability to absorb workers will diminish as well...

It can be proved empirically that all of our arguments are correct.

The boycott begun by the Jews has led to a boycott on the part of the Arabs. Just as the "nationalists" amongst us consider anyone who employs an Arab as a "traitor", so do the Arab nationalists consider a traitor anyone of their people who sell us a single dunam of land. An Arab who sells land to a Jew is in no better condition in his community than the farmers from Kfar Saba are in our yishuv.

Everywhere where exclusive Jewish labour exists, the costs of production have risen so that the competitive stance of our produce is threatened. High wages and low productivity threaten our very existence in the market.

Berl KATZNELSON

On Jewish Labour

1931

The condition of Jewish labour in the villages has had its ups and downs. When the workers fled the villages, they did so with heavy hearts. To get work in the village in the first place required many sacrifices and often led to bitter despair. But every time it seemed that there was another chance to gain employment in the villages, Jewish workers arrived. There were periods when the villages were closed to us completely. But over these years, the village has played a vital role in the workers' life. There, in the village, the pioneer became a worker. There he struggled with himself: there he struggled with the right to work. The village was a source of income and an absorption center. The conquest of labour and aliyah are two sides of the same coin. Without aliyah there will be no work. The worker who manages to enter the labour market must guard his place or create his own independent source of employment. And without aliyah, there won't be a struggle to open the private sector and there will be no advances in Jewish labour. There won't be any chance of gaining a foothold in the Jewish capitalist economy developing here. But without the struggle for Jewish labour, there won't be any chance to absorb immigration. By surrendering the struggle over Jewish labour, we surrender possibilities of expanded settlement.

Therefore I see the question of Jewish labour in the villages central to the future of Zionism itself. The Zionist movement cannot ignore the issue. Without Jewish labour, Zionism has no moral substance, no economic reality and no political strength.



Chalutzim in the fields of Rehovot

Kopilevitz

At the beginning of the busy season, almost all of the workers left their work in agriculture, and went to seek jobs in the building trades. We had to take new, unexperienced workers and teach them to use pruning shears and hoes...while we managed somehow to finish the picking, when it came to weeding and irrigation, it was a disaster. In the end we were forced to hire Arabs in order to save the orchards. The small orchards which need only one or two workers somehow managed, but the larger groves, which need dozens of workers, were in terrible shape...

Ostashinski

During the year the workers gradually left. Productivity fell to about a quarter of what it should be. The work that was done was done poorly. The groves suffered and we faced economic ruin. The busy season started and there was the danger that we wouldn't finish any of the work. A "mobilization" was proclaimed. But who was mobilized? Craftsmen, students, schoolgirls - everyone except experienced agricultural workers! The "mobilization" was a demonstration, but no good economically speaking...

Motzkin

We are struggling with our debts. Fruit prices are falling, the work is done poorly, the wage differential between Arabs and Jews is large and the difference in productivity is enormous. We are on the edge of ruin. Under these conditions we won't be able to continue. We came here years ago, and worked and built. We hired Jewish workers before there was a Histadrut. We helped them settle and create their institutions - all at our expense. And now they are destroying everything we created...



Arab construction workers in Israel, post-1967

The Economic Structure of Jewish Settlement(1927)

The war being waged against the workers is not an affair of little consequence. I see it as the beginning of the rift between "chalutzit" and the "entrepreneur" spirit, between the principles of a movement seeking a new path and the principles of economic calculation. This is a rift that can be found in any social movement whose origins are not economic (i.e. religious, national, etc.) but which must begin to adjust to economic realities. This is an inevitable process. But I think that it is a mistake to try to spur on the process of adjustment by giving some order or command from above. We still need the "chalutzit" (pioneering spirit). There is more to this pioneering spirit than religious or nationalist fervor. Such fervor may suffice to bring a Jew to Palestine, but it will not sustain him day to day, year after year, in a struggle for existence. It certainly will not sustain a person in whom the entrepreneurial spirit leads him to seek the line of least economic resistance, the line of maximum economic profit.

Each of these camps - the pioneering camp and the entrepreneur camp - each with its own mentality - has a place in our settlement plans. But it is important to determine the proper place for each. If we need to settle the malaria-cursed valleys with their hostile Beduin population, we will not be able to do so with middle-class entrepreneurs. We will succeed only if we have young pioneers who fear no hardship to their spirit or body...

At this Congress you will find, I think, people who react with disdain to the idealistic fervor which pervades our settlement policy. This disdain would have its place if we were sitting in an assembly of share-holders of some large corporation and were dealing with matters of economic profit. But the day that economic profit becomes the *raison d'être* of our movement - on that day our movement will die forever. One of the treasures of our movement is the enthusiasm and fervor of our settlers. This enthusiasm is the factor which gains world wide attention and attracts financial aid which otherwise would not be available.

Pioneering spirit means more than the willingness of the chalutz to do whatever work needs to be done. Chalutzit has other advantages as well... For instance, in the matter of the Hebrew language and youth education. The Jewish workers in Palestine are the stronghold of the Hebrew language. In no other circles is the language preserved and developed to such a degree; in other immigrant groups there is no inclination to use the Hebrew language. No worker would dream of sending his children to any but a Hebrew school; amongst other immigrants there are many examples of such behaviour...

The second point is this. The anti-worker factions think that they understand everything better than the workers. In fact, there is no other nation in the world whose working class can compare to ours in matters of education and sophistication. Therefore, we should weigh carefully before we ignore the working class' opinion, especially when dealing with the issue of the social structures they themselves have developed. The bourgeois Zionists have little reason to exaggerate the extent of workers' mistakes; and in any case, the bourgeois Zionists have not proved themselves any better... Those who spread hatred towards the workers place our entire movement in danger. Arrows aimed at the heart of the working class may very well strike at the heart of the Zionist movement itself...

Many think that it is inevitable that a new, better Jewish society will rise in Palestine. I don't agree. We will reap tomorrow what we sow today. Therefore, it is so important that the seed be good. More faith and greater understanding on everyone's part are the conditions necessary for the creation of a new Jewish society in Palestine.



Arthur Ruppin

Yehoshua SUPERSKY

Extract from speech to Zionist Congress (1925)

The entire Jewish people contributed to the development of Palestine 1,700,000 pounds sterling during the years of the third and fourth aliyah. If we study the statistics concerning individual private investment in the same period we will discover that the new immigrants privately invested more than 2,000,000 sterling in industry, more than 5,000,000 in construction and real estate and more than half a million sterling in agriculture, even though private enterprise is not usually interested in agriculture in Palestine.

We must reach the conclusion that several tens of thousands of new immigrants contributed to this land, in addition to their labour and sacrifices and initiative, a sum of capital four times greater than that contributed by the entire Jewish people!

There are many more fascinating facts. These tens of thousands, who are accused in certain circles of being parasites who do no productive labour, built hundreds of factories and workshops. This wave of immigration not only brought people and capital but also provided places of employment for workers, that is, for the enemies of private enterprise. In my opinion, we must once and for all recognize the facts of life: the working class in Palestine could not survive only on the public capital organized by the Zionist movement. Almost 80% of the Jewish workers in Palestine live only because they work in the private enterprise sector...

Extract on Private Enterprise and Zionism

1. I often think of a different type of "Hachshara" (training). This is not the romantic hachshara and it requires a long time and much effort - much more than the agricultural training given in a year. But it is a more important kind of training. I mean to acquire capital and property and to immigrate to Palestine with it even if one is already not so young, but has the possibility of investing it there in some economic project. Of course not everyone can think of becoming a capitalist. But he who has the chance should weigh it carefully - whether to postpone his aliyah and to dedicate several years to accumulating capital. I'm sure that for the individual it is more exciting and interesting to drop everything and to immigrate immediately. But the settlement as a whole will probably benefit more if he waits and brings something with him. This is particularly true of young doctors, lawyers, and engineers. In general, sons of wealthy families who have a chance for economic success in the Goleh and who are good Zionists should think this problem over very carefully - what is more important for the existence of a state: speed or strength? True, this requires many years but your land deserved no less...

I am not suggesting this idea as a "system" of Betar training, but God bless every Betar member who comes and tells me, "I have an immigration certificate but will not immigrate as a poor man. I will first become a millionaire!" A millionaire he probably won't become and not even half a millionaire but the idea is a Betar idea and the audacity is also in the nature of Betar.

2. Jewish labour is a synonym for a Jewish majority in Palestine. Any assault on Jewish labour is a national crime. Any assault on private capital is no less a crime. Any assault on normal profits in private enterprise is national betrayal. So it seems that there is an unsolvable conflict. But in the period of national renaissance there is no room for class conflicts, only their resolution. During this period, such conflicts must be muted in the name of renaissance. This is the reason to raise the banner of national arbitration and to insure the creation of institutions of national harmony and unity.
3. The newspapers report that the Revisionist Party seeks to destroy Jewish workers federations. This is not true. No one wants to destroy Jewish workers' federations. Workers need to be organized. What we want to destroy is one federation: the General Federation of Jewish Labourers!! More exactly - we want to destroy (and will succeed) their demand for monopoly and control. It is true. Yes - DESTROY!!
4. Our conclusion is that the development of Palestine can be and must be based upon the collective enthusiasm of millions of small entrepreneurs who each in his own small way, will contribute to the accumulation of the vast sums we need. Our task is to pave the way and to provide the necessary infrastructure for the enthusiasm of private enterprise.

5. The Zionist movement must now recognize the rights and contribution of an important element - the Jewish merchant. The Jewish merchant class, scattered throughout the diaspora, is our natural ally, and can determine the fate of our produce. Too many people have fallen prey to nonsense about a "classless society" as if one could create a nation made up only of farmers and workers without a single merchant amongst them. Too often we hear such rubbish as the slogan that the merchant is nothing but a useless intermediary, an unnecessary block between the producer and consumer. Commerce is the key to all economic progress; public, national and social development. Commerce to national life is as the blood system to the body; no organ is more important.

LETTER FROM REVISIONISTS TO SECRETARIAT OF THE HISTADRUT

9/11/30

"...It is clear that, by its nature, the Histadrut should be a purely 'trade union' organisation. That is, it should be solely concerned with the defense of workers' professional interests without introducing political considerations. Any Jewish worker should be able to be a member of such a trade union federation regardless of his Zionist (political) views. Unfortunately, under the present circumstances, the Histadrut has acquired a political (i.e. party) complexion. In particular, the secretariat and other leading officials are openly hostile towards workers who are members of Betar and the Revisionist party...

We have the following simple demand: The Jewish community in Palestine needs a non-political, non-party affiliated trade union organisation whose sole concern is the defense of professional interests regardless of a worker's political views..."

M. Grossman

H. MERCHAVI - "HE HALUTZ"

from Tel-Hai, Betar Warsaw
1930

The years have passed. Ten years since the beginning of the long march toward our final goal - a Jewish state. Ten years of propaganda, ten years of declarations - but also ten years of real, practical work. Ten years of building the foundations of the revived Jewish state. The whole Zionist movement thought, at first, that we would march united, down the road toward the realization of the Zionist dream. "He Halutz" was founded in order to accomplish that task, in order to be the builders, in order to sacrifice themselves, in order to be ready for anything...

Hachshara (preparation) was the paramount task of "He Halutz". And the essence of hachshara is education. He Halutz had to educate all the Jewish youth who sought to immigrate. This youth know nothing about labour, about statehood, about citizenship. The youth had to be trained to become the vanguard of the Zionist movement - a vanguard of pioneers, without interest in class or party, but with the burning interest in the realization of the Jewish state...

But He Halutz has forgotten about the Jewish state. He Halutz has ceased to be the vanguard of pioneers seeking to build, and today thinks only of the class and the party. Meanwhile, it has forgotten the basics of Zionism...

He Halutz was created as the general organization of all those interested in immigration and building the Jewish state. "All those interested" were always a small number, and those in He Halutz, a minority amongst even them. Sectarianism has become the practical basis of He Halutz and the principle of sectarianism its ideology. Socialist experiments led to failures in the development of the yishuv and to isolationism in Zionist policy. There is no mass immigration because no organization is prepared to handle it. The vanguard of pioneers to build the state has become a vanguard of pioneers to build the party...

TWO STORIES:
BACKGROUND OF HALUTZIM FROM POLAND

1925 - 1930

Moshe Portzia:

Just as the Six-Day-War shook Soviet Jewry to the depths of its soul and led it to renew its Jewish identity - the same kind of thing happened to me one day in the winter of 1921-22. Not six days - only a moment or two - but every time I remember those moments, I relive the experience as if it was happening again.

I was sitting in the office of one of the leaders of the Cheka (Bolshevik Secret Police) - he was my brother. I was only a lad of 16 and had been recently released from the Red Army when it was discovered that I was underage. I had brought my brother something and was about to leave for home when a man was brought to my brother's office: a butcher, about 40 years old, 6 feet tall, handsome with a large black beard. There were four people now in the room: the butcher, my brother, and another Cheka agent and myself. I had just read the butcher's "file" which had been on my brother's desk. He was accused of secretly slaughtering a milking cow to sell it as kosher meat. That year there was a terrible famine; millions of people had starved to death, especially children. Every milking cow saved the lives of many babies. There were no law books yet, but the verdict for a crime like this was clear: the firing squad.

In order that you may understand, I must explain something. During that stormy period of civil war, mass destruction and public executions, my generation was already used to the sight of a man marching to his death. One moment alive; the next the bullet. And they all looked the same - not like men, but like corpses. Nothing else existed - only him and his death.

The butcher stood before my brother who read him the file. There was no need for an interrogation. Only the announcement that on such and such a day, at such and such an hour, the butcher had been caught at the crime. The last sentence read that the accused had heard the charges and admits his guilt. My brother dipped his pen with ink and gave it to the butcher to sign his own death sentence.

And then it happened.

Up to this moment, the butcher had been like all the rest: only a corpse and nothing more. Nothing but himself and his death. In another moment he'll leave the room, turn left toward the basement - a bullet in the neck...

And then the unbelievable happened - death left the butcher! He returned to life - he was possessed by something more important, something stronger than death! His hand remained frozen in the air: he couldn't sign the document. It was Shabbat.

Four Jews sat silently in that room, in absolute silence, but we spoke through open minds. We knew what had happened. All four of us were Jews and human beings, but the three of us were so tiny, and he seemed suddenly so large - through the strength of his Judaism. And then my brother got up, took the pen out of his hand and said a few words in Yiddish - that it would be all right, he would destroy the

file - the butcher was free. And then my brother paled, what would the other agent do? He could have gotten up and gone into the next office and reported the whole incident. But after a moment of silence, he joined my brother.

From that moment, I was at a loss. I didn't want to continue studying, I couldn't. I kept asking myself, "Am I also a Jew? What is my tie to my people, to its fate, to its homeland?" I didn't have any answers. This was a painful process that went on almost two years. And since I was already "completely out of it" and since it was clear that the Red Army was not about to set out on a path of revolutionary war across Europe, and since my mother was trapped in a region that had been annexed to Poland, I agreed to cross the border to her...

I crossed the border (illegally) in 1924 and settled with my mother in Rubnow. Family connections led to a good job in a lawyer's office. But is that what I had come for? My decision to cross the border had been based mainly on the hope that there, in Poland, I would find a large, vital Jewish community that could give me the answers I was seeking...

I joined the city football team which was almost exclusively Jewish. There a Revisionist shaliach found us. He wanted to start a ken of Betar. Because he was a Revisionist, he was looking for youth like us: athletes; assimilationists, children of the Russian culture. He introduced us to Jabotinsky's writings and ideology. He convinced us to leave the sport club and call ourselves Maccabi. He worked hard to teach us to be good Revisionists. And he would have succeeded...

But then he got a certificate for aliyah. He didn't want to abandon us completely, so he took us and introduced us to the ken of HeChalutz. Because the people in HeHalutz were so different from us, the mixture never worked. My ten friends dropped out quickly. Only I remained. Maybe because my desire to find my Jewish identity was stronger...The people in the ken didn't take me too seriously. I was strange, perhaps even exotic, but tolerable...I became the unofficial gizbar of the ken. Every group of chalutzim on its way to Klosova would come to me to help finance the final stages of the trip...

This situation made me so depressed that I started drinking, until one day I woke up and said: "Stop, enough!" The next morning I took the train to Klosova...

Pinchas Friedman:

I grew up and studied at the yeshiva in Lvov. I might have become just like all the other yeshiva boys - waiting for the Messiah and in the meantime setting up a family and sinking into a daily routine. But I was lucky - I was one of the few in whom some strange internal impulse pushed us to abandon our families and towns. I was one of those who rebelled - who got up and left. We couldn't go on like that. The humiliation that Poland visited upon her Jews at that time was too great for us to take. But only a few were ready to reach the necessary conclusion, to cut all the old ties, uproot and seek a new world...

One Shabbat afternoon, after praying with father and after finishing our Shabbat meal and singing the traditional songs, I went to my room. I cut off my sideburns,

took off my black silk cloak and put on the clothes of a chalutz. I had prepared these clothes ahead of time, after I had visited the ken of He Halutz in Lvov. The next morning I set out for the hachshara farm...

The commune seemed familiar to me. Everything belonged to everyone. At the yeshiva we had eaten beans and buckwheat day after day. Here it was the same. There at yeshiva it hadn't been important what we ate - so it was here too. Man was not born to eat. He was born in order to make changes in this world. What's so important about food? If there are no beds, we'll sleep on planks. What's important is the ideal, the purpose, the goal.

The passage from yeshiva to commune was so easy because they seemed so similar. Sometimes, though, we starved, especially during the winter. Snow would cover the quarry and there would be no work. And we suffered from the cold when we went out to work in the snow without proper clothes and without shoes. We had only pieces of rubber cut from tires and we wrapped our legs in sacks and rags. Working with frozen rock and bare hands was a nightmare, but we were happy. We were young believers sure of our path. Those were golden days of dreams. We expressed our deep belief in our national salvation through the chasidic songs and dances and excitement - so like the yeshiva...

Two years later I made aliyah and became a member of Givat Hashlosha. There I heard a comment once in the chadar ochel: "We are like fertilizers on barren Jewish land; without us there will be no crop..."



At Kibbutz Ein Harod, 1934

Description of His Life at Klosova

May 1926

After many hours of travel I arrived at Klosova. What I saw was a small village surrounded by forests and swamps. There were puddles of water and mud everywhere. While I stood looking at this strange new scene, a young man came up to me and introduced himself as a member of the Kibbutz. He had come to the train station to meet the new arrival. On our way to the kibbutz he told me that everything was being reorganized and that I was among the first to arrive. A large house was being prepared for the kvutza, but in the meantime we were to live in a small cabin that had been rented from one of the villagers.

After a short rest I set out to see the quarry - the place where we would be working and training ourselves. The quarry was a large deep crater within which a mass of men, horses and wagons seemed to be in perpetual motion. The workers dressed in scraps of burlap and their feet were wrapped in rags. In one corner men were extracting large boulders from the cliff face and pushing them into the crater. In another corner men with sledge hammers were smashing the boulders into bits and others were loading the stone by hand into carts. I stood thunderstruck and thought to myself, "Tomorrow I'll be here working like this - looking like them?!!" I returned to the kibbutz quietly, thinking uneasy thoughts. An older youth saw my depression and said to me, "Don't worry, chaver. It's only the first impression; it's not really that bad. There's a chaver here who is experienced in quarry work. He'll help us. We mustn't despair - mustn't quit in the middle. Once we get used to it, it'll be OK."

The next day we went down to the quarry and set to work. We started loading stone into wagons. The stone was heavy and wet and we cut our hands and bruised ourselves. But we wouldn't quit and we encouraged each other...

In the meantime new chaverim had arrived and there were now forty of us. We moved to a different building - a farmer's warehouse with no windows. Light came in only through the door which we left open all day. Most of us worked in the quarry, some in a carpentry shop. We were always busy with work and the need to train ourselves in the various aspects of stone cutting. After work there were asafot, singing and dancing. But our cultural life was poor. We only received one newspaper and it would pass from hand to hand. We couldn't read a book because there wasn't enough light. Nevertheless, we conducted an ulpan and occasionally heard a lecture on Zionist politics...

Our main problem was the terrible crowdedness. We'd sleep two in a bed, with little room between beds and no closets. We ate in shifts in the chadar ochel. There were never enough plates or water, and the sanitary conditions were horrible. And every day new people would arrive to join the kibbutz. It was difficult to absorb them all into the chevra and into work. The second problem was illness. A large percentage of the chaverim were unable to work every day. Crowdedness, noise and all-night dancing are not conducive to a life of hard physical labour.

Every morning the guard would pass from bed to bed and wake everyone. Most people

got up. But there were always some whose tiredness and desire for more sleep would make them say, "I don't feel well." No one asked any questions. They would wake up later and walk around with nothing to do. This led eventually to complaints amongst the chaverim... one day chaverim raised the issue at the asefa. A suggestion was made that the sick people get a doctor's certificate. This led, of course, to a violent argument. Nothing could be done, because a kibbutz is built on mutual trust. The suggestion was rejected, but the next day everyone got up for work except for those who were really sick...

Fifty years have passed since then and I have seen many changes take place here in Israel, But I'll always remember this: at Klosova my life was revolutionized. There I became a man who learned to live by the sweat of my brow, by honest labour. To this day I am a construction worker and I'm proud to count myself amongst those who built this land...

L. LEVITE

Confirmation Night In Klosova

...The next day there was an asefa. Everyone was there. I explained the situation in the movement and in Palestine and why we had to choose the olim. I told them that we had only 70 certificates for the 260 candidates. Levy (one of the leaders of Klosova) spoke: "A period of confirmation like this can make or break the kibbutz. We have to create an atmosphere that will lead to even greater internal cohesion." No one spoke. We understand this as a sign of agreement. The asefa then chose an aliyah committee to review each individual case and confirm or deny his right for aliyah...

The committee sat three consecutive days and nights. The work was hard both objectively and psychologically. We had to choose some 65 candidates from amongst 260 people who have already been in hachshara for a long time. We had to deal with the new meaning "confirmation" had acquired. Up until now, such a committee had only reviewed the candidate on a theoretical level - choosing those who were ready for aliyah and those who still needed additional training. Now we had a set number of certificates and we had to confirm a person's actual chance for aliyah...

How did we choose? We used a number of criteria. How long had a chaver been in hachshara? What was his relationship to work and to his chevra? How much Hebrew did he know? What was his position in the kvutza? How strong were his ideas about the collective? Did he have a strong, clear, communal, working-class nature? All these we considered. The final basis for the decision was the following: the candidates suitability to the needs of the kibbutz and Palestine at that time...

"...All our fears that the revived national movement which sprung up after the latest events in Israel would have no lasting effect here, and would not lead to any great results have proved true to an even greater degree than we feared. After the initial excitement and revival comes the traditional Jewish sobriety - cold, clear, fearful. Everyone has second thoughts. The interest and concern in what is going on in Israel has grown, but the belief in Israel, in her future and growth, has not grown - in fact it has weakened.

The Jews are simply afraid. What can be done with these crazy Arabs, they ask. Nothing can be explained or proved. The local press doesn't help. Every news story is blown up out of proportion. Every day there is another story about unrest in Israel. And all this makes an impression. You try to explain to the Jew that everything is normal and quiet, and he laughs. "What kind of quiet, if every day someone is killed?"

There is another problem. The Jews are convinced that the great powers are behind it all. They say simply, "What's the use of all our efforts? What chance do we have against a force like that..." This kind of thinking leads to the conclusion amongst many that there is no point in our work...

The Jew who knows that the proper conclusion to be reached after all this is a redoubling of our efforts - those Jews are few in number. Most people's faith has been shattered. The average Jew wants insurance, wants to know for sure what will be and how and when. What will be when the whole world is against us?... You don't meet any established Jews who are thinking of aliyah or of investing in Israel. Their efforts are directed towards convincing their sons not to go.

This is the situation. This is the tragedy of our people - a people who don't know how to save themselves. And you have to know: the situation of the Jews here is hopeless, beyond redemption. The external political conditions are actually quite good. What is at work here are historical-economic factors before which the political regime is irrelevant. The Jew here knows his place. He knows very well that he is suspended in air, that the slightest wind will topple him. But, on the other hand, when you tell such a Jew about the possibility of a life of honest labour, he only wants to know if he can get rich.

It's obvious that to such a Jew the life of a kibbutz is beyond comprehension. It's not that he doesn't believe in the economic or social success of the kibbutz. He has no doubts about that. He just can't imagine - no matter how many times you explain - that life can be based on cooperation and brotherhood, not on competition and jealousy.

The Jewish woman is easier to convince, until you reach the one point that spoils it all - "But how will I send my children to the university?" And it doesn't do any good to point out all the unemployed college graduates... The point of life remains: a diploma for my son and husband for my daughter...

The only living force here is the youth... The forces pushing the youth to our movement are different than any we have known before. Not the stormy events of the hour, or the dreams of great social movements, or ideology - none of these are the critical agent. The reasons are different, perhaps less conscious but nonetheless real.

The great majority of Jewish youth simply have nothing to do with their lives. Simple but true. The greater part of the youth (even those with jobs) are idle. Those with jobs are unsure of them... And besides this every youth sees clearly what his parents try to ignore - that there is no basis for their life here, no meaning. And so their desire to leave, to flee from it all as quickly as possible. And that is what they're doing...

L. Levite
December, 1929
Warsaw



Chalutzot go to work

The Breach of Discipline
(1934)

The whole question of discipline simply makes me want to laugh; for when it is a matter of life and death for a whole epoch of Jewish history, perhaps for the whole Jewish people, one does not discuss trivialities. Especially so, when I consider it unthinkable that anyone should be scared by a veto issued by people who have not an atom of authority and who enjoy not an atom of prestige amongst the Jewish masses. One can only ridicule them, and the best way to ridicule is, after all, to ignore.

I can only smile at those communal leaders who are today preaching against the petition in the name of discipline. One could understand and perhaps forgive vetoes coming from a body which proposes an alternative method. My eyes and ears are open. Come, tell me my friends, what other methods does that tragic-comic body propose? Collections for the JNF? Another lamb, another orchard, another factory? Is that to be our answer to what is happening all around us?

The Jew must no longer allow himself to be fooled by the childish babblings of people who not only do not understand the practical alphabet but do not even understand the simple arithmetic of twice two. Collect money - yes, build factories - yes, quite right. But you must see that this should be to your benefit, not to that of your enemy. Here we have shown during the past few years veritable miracles of building, making Palestine the richest country in the East. And just because of this she is attracting Arabs from the neighbouring poverty-stricken countries. They are allowed in; we are not!

Since the beginning of the Revisionist Movement we have said: build - certainly, collect money - certainly. But this only has a meaning when at the same time you conduct an incessant struggle that what we are building should be for the benefit of our people and our ideal, not that another people should be enriched.

Do not despair! Our greatest tragedy is that the world has not a proper perspective of the true extent of our suffering. Perhaps she has heard about it; but she is so conceived with her own troubles that she turns from you and says: It's not my business. I have never believed that that is the world's last word; the final answer of her collective soul; for the moment that becomes your conception of the world, you are lost forever. Go to the world, compel her to listen, compel her to measure the whole supernatural abyss of your sorrow. Bring her face to face, not with representatives - for do you not see how all representation, even the parliamentary kind, has begun to sicken her? No, face to face with the true mass phenomena of your life - mobilize yourselves, your children, your neighbor...

And that is the moment when a body, which has itself lost all courage and all belief, comes out against us and demands that we should not move a finger - and observe discipline. Seldom has there been such a narrow, blind, parochial egoism, such an inability and unwillingness to understand the meaning and the necessity of a great and tragic hour.

Terror or Zionist Struggle (1944)

We have to answer two questions or, to be more exact, we have to make two decisions. The first: terror or political, Zionist struggle. The question is which one will it be. We can't do both. These two methods cannot coexist. The second decision: terrorist organizations or an organized community, nation, working class. Again - it's one or the other. The two cannot coexist.

We are witnesses to a series of incidents which can only be described by their true names: murder, theft, extortion. If these things had been done without any ideological political pretensions, we would not hesitate to condemn them for what they really are - criminal acts. No civilized community can tolerate such things. But simple murder or theft, as reprehensible as they are, are not that dangerous. But these crimes are being committed in the name of the Zionist idea. The danger is not to an individual, his well-being and property. The danger is much more serious than that. These crimes endanger our purpose, our dream. The danger is that acts of murder and extortion, which are known quite simply as terror, are being perpetrated in the name of an idea - and in place of that idea. They are being perpetrated, not as part of a political struggle - but in fact, in place of that struggle.

We have to make it clear to ourselves, to the nation, the yishuv, the youth, the working class, to every Jew what the alternatives are. One way is the road of Zionist struggle which means immigration at all times and under all circumstances, settlement at whatever cost, education of the Jewish people to free themselves from the slavery of the Golah, the struggle to capture world public opinion for the Zionist cause, organized resistance to any attempt to limit our freedom, resistance that is organized, planned, responsible and yet determined. All this is the meaning of Zionist struggle. And there is another way: the path of terror and extortion and murder which take the place of all those elements of Zionism. It's one path or the other. There is no compromise...

The existence of murderers or thieves cannot undermine the existence of a community if that community is healthy. But these murderers clothe themselves as natural heroes and appear in the name of the yishuv or at least on its behalf. They act in the name of our freedom (so they say), on behalf of our future and in order to liberate us. If the yishuv doesn't react to this then it will have no chance to follow the path of Zionist struggle. Even when the murderer or thief is simply a wanton individual, every responsible citizen has a duty to search him out and uproot him from society. But when the murderer speaks in our name and we remain silent; the moment a murder is perpetrated on our behalf and we don't react - then the yishuv has taken the road toward general terrorism and there is no way back.

And just as there is no choice but to decide between terrorism and Zionist struggle, there is no way to avoid the second decision: terrorist gangs or an organized yishuv. One way means that the Jewish people recognizes its fate and recognizes the path of its redemption, and takes action to save itself - building and settling, diplomatic efforts, resistance and violence, when necessary. These actions are taken on the basis of national unity and national responsibility and as the result of public debate and discussion and then the decisions are made...

The other path means that hoodlum gangs who have succeeded in acquiring machine guns and dynamite will make decisions for us without asking us, or consulting us. The gangs will decide what the position of the yishuv is...

There can be no illusions concerning the possibility that these two alternatives can coexist. Either the path of terrorism or Zionism. Either terrorist gangs or an organized yishuv...



David Ben-Gurion reads Declaration of Independence - May 14, 1948

On Militarism

Militarism is a despicable word. But adults shouldn't allow themselves to be frightened by the sound of a word. They should be capable of analyzing a concept and discerning that which is good as well as that which is bad. War, the death of young innocent people - that is bad. Everyone agrees on that and we are all united in our hopes that an era will come in which there will be no more war. But is that all there is to the concept of militarism?...

The truth is that only war, killing, is bad. Military life itself has several positive aspects that are thought to be important in any healthy civilian life. First of all, the spartan simplicity and egalitarianism of army life. Second - the contribution that rigorous physical exertion makes toward general health. Third - military discipline itself. This last discipline, requires some more careful explanation.

Frequently we repeat things that we actually no longer believe. For instance, if one was to ask the average man his opinion of military discipline, he would most likely react negatively, crying out that "it turns men into machines!" But, in fact, the same man reacts favourably and excitedly upon viewing a larger group of people engaged in precision march, moving together as a single mechanical unit... There is nothing in the world that excites our imagination more than the ability of masses of people to act at certain times, as a single well-trained disciplined unit. That is the difference between a mob and a nation...

It is one thing to force a human being against his will to be part of a machine. It is quite another thing if, as a result of a certain way of thinking, a man chooses to train himself to think and act as part of a well-oiled machine. This is the difference between compulsion and self-discipline. The first succeeds only with wild animals. The second is a characteristic of a completely cultured society...

We have to have patience especially with the youth. We mustn't be frightened by Latin words like militarism. The hatred of war is one of the treasures of human civilization. Our prophets were the first to deplore mass killings and murder and we are all loyal to that tradition. We seek not to educate our youth to desire war. But that same education (which our enemies decry as militaristic) has certain positive aspects which will create a new and healthier generation.

And that is what counts!

Militarism in the Palmach

An individual soldier's self-respect is no less a military value than a general humanist value. An army is comprised of individuals and an army's quality is a direct function of the value of each and every one of those individuals. No two individuals have the same talents, characteristics, habits or natures. The existence of a standardized external framework based on discipline, requires that individualized educational and professional attention be paid to each soldier in the unit.

There is no doubt that the characteristics which distinguish a well-balanced human being are those required of the well-trained soldier. These characteristics cannot be obtained through unreasonable requirements of discipline, and obedience. Any attempt to damage a person's individuality by forcing him into an unreasonably restrictive framework can only lead to the suppression of his spirit and the degradation of the man. The result will be that people will see military service as an evil to be avoided at best and suffered in silence at worst. Such attitudes are wasteful of precious human talents and will lower the quality of the army as a whole...

A military unit's quality is always a function of the quality of the individuals comprising it. Therefore: encouragement of the individual, development of his personality, cultivation of his special talents and qualities, elevation of the individual's self-esteem and self-respect - these were the principles that directed the military training in the Palmach. That training was designed to aid each soldier in developing his own personality and spirit...

A member of the Palmach never saw himself as a cog in some military machine... the individual felt himself a conscious partner in his society's development and struggle for existence; his contribution was necessary for success...

P A L M A C H

Palmach - abbreviation for Plugot Machatz: "assault companies"; the permanently mobilized striking force of the Haganah. The Palmach was established in 1941, when Axis forces were nearing the approaches to Palestine. Nine assault companies, scattered throughout the country, were to be formed from volunteers from existing Haganah units. They were prepared to report for active service on 24 hours notice and serve in any capacity whenever and wherever required.

Yitzhak Sadeh was the first commander of the Palmach, and was directly subordinated to the Haganah Chief of Staff. The Palmach assumed the character and function of a commando unit, and in addition to an infantry, prepared a special naval force which was involved in illegal immigration, and established the nucleus of an air force in the guise of a civilian flying club. Great emphasis was put not only on physical training, but on educational activity and ideological guidance as well. There was a very strong connection between the Palmach and the kibbutz movement, especially with Kibbutz HaMeuchad.

In 1945, Yigal Allon became commander of the Palmach. In August 1948, David Ben-Gurion, then Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the provisional government, argued that all units must be under the direct command of the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) general staff in all respects. He was successful and in May 1949, the separate staff of the Palmach was disbanded, and its units merged into the IDF.

IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI (Etzel)

I.Z.L. or Irgun (Hebrew for "National Military Organisation") was an underground armed organisation founded in Jerusalem in 1931 by a group of Hagana commanders who had left the Hagana in protest against its defensive character. They joined with a clandestine armed force of Betar members from Tel-Aviv.

In April 1937, during the Arab riots, the Irgun split over the issue of terrorism, and half its membership returned to the Hagana. The rest formed a new Irgun, connected ideologically to the Revisionists, which carried out armed reprisals against the Arabs.

After the British White Paper of 1939, the Irgun directed attacks against the British. In 1940, the Irgun declared a "truce" with the British, and a splinter-group, Lechi, led by Avraham Stern, was formed.

David Raziel, the commander of the Irgun, fell in a British operation in Iraq, and was replaced by Ya'akov Meridor, who was replaced by Menachem Begin in Dec. 1943.

In February 1944, the Irgun declared war on the British. The Jewish Agency and Hagana handed over some Irgun leaders to the British in "the saison."

After the war, the Hagana, the Irgun and Lechi formed a united front against the British until 1946. In September 1948, the Irgun disbanded and merged into the I.D.F. (Israel Defence Forces).

Extract from lecture on PALMACH

29/5/45

In this lecture before the seminar shlichim of the kibbutz movement, Allon explains some of the unique elements which distinguish the Palmach from other military units.

We can't build the Palmach on elitism, on select individuals. We can't afford to create an elite commando unit. People, who at first appeared to be worthless and of whom we expected only problems, turned out to be loyal and responsible chaverim. Some of them even hold positions of great importance within the unit. Someone once tried to explain the essence of the Palmach - to explain the significance of the combining of work-camps and military exercises. He said that the Palmach was similar to the "Hechalutz" in Poland. I think that there is something to that comparison. Our division is the only organization today in Palestine which educates toward chalutzit. Not only youth movement graduates or kibbutz children, but also many many young people who arrived by accident, unintentionally, in the Palmach. No ideology brought them to us but during their service with us they absorbed the pioneering spirit and accepted the role of chalutzic vanguard.

I want to say something about our role in the field of education. First of all, we had an educational problem explaining to our chaverim that the combination of work and military training is not simply a matter of scarce resources. (In our hearts we know, of course, that that was the main reason.) We had to explain the situation not just as the force of necessity, but as a result of educational principle. And I want to tell you that even if I received today a budget which would allow me to maintain the Palmach on a military basis alone, I would be opposed to a programme which consisted exclusively of military training. I would demand that our chaverim work also (although the proportions between work and training would change). I assume that even if we already had achieved our independence and the Jewish state and a legal army already existed, there would be a need to educate that army to a life of work and training.

The situation requires continuous education. We have to justify the hours of work in the kibbutzim, to raise the value of work and make its importance equal to that of military training. We want to create a situation in which refusal to work is the same as the refusal to obey a military command. There are probably amongst you chavrei kibbutz who can tell us about the difficulties that exist with the work gangs in the kibbutzim. The chaverim exploit all their energy during the hours of military training and then, during work, they slack off and rest a little. This exists but we have succeeded in greatly improving ourselves in this area. If someone is reported as not fulfilling his obligations at work, he is courtmartialled as if he refused to obey an order. We can say today that this combined program of work and training has proved itself and not only from a budgetary point of view. It is also an educational success. Working in the kibbutzim helps prevent certain negative militaristic phenomena from taking root amongst the chaverim. I can't say that we have succeeded 100%, but the days spent working certainly lessen the dangers of an idle militaristic mentality taking over in the unit.

This cooperation, the ties that have been created between our chaverim and the members of the kibbutzim has, itself, a unique educational value. The situation allows youth, who under different circumstances would never have met the reality of communal life, to acquaint themselves with that reality - to come into intimate contact with kibbutz. The process leads to important successes in mobilizing new groups on behalf of the cooperative movements...

Extracts from "THE REVOLT"

The underground fighters of the Irgun arose to overthrow and replace a regime. We used physical force because we were faced by physical force. But physical force was neither our aim nor our creed. We believed in the supremacy of moral forces. It was our enemy who mocked at them. That is why notwithstanding the enemy's tremendous preponderance in physical strength, he it was who was defeated, and not we. That is the law of history... We were thankful that we were able to prove that law, not only for our own people, but for humanity as a whole. But what has a struggle for the dignity of man, against oppression and subjugation, to do with "terrorism"? Our purpose, in fact, was precisely the reverse of "terrorism." The whole essence of our struggle was the determination to free our people of its chief affliction - fear. How could we continue to live in this hostile world in which the Jew was attacked because he was a Jew - how could we go on living without arms, without a homeland, without elementary means of defense? We of the Irgun Tzvai Leumi arose therefore to rebel and fight, not in order to instil fear but to eradicate it. We were not a "terrorist" group - neither in the structure of our organization, in our methods of warfare, nor in spirit...

We refused to surrender to the "diktat" of the institutions of the Yishuv not because of any spurious considerations of prestige nor even out of honest self-respect. Had we surrendered we should not have felt any shame. We had, after all, done what we could for our people. We had raised the banner of revolt; we had hit at the oppressor; we had made sacrifices; we had not spared ourselves, our personal liberty, our private lives...

But we viewed the whole situation in a totally different manner. We examined it from the point of view of the whole of Jewry. The extermination of the Jews of Europe was in full swing. The gates of Palestine were barred to any who sought sanctuary. Where then was the political change that could justify the cessation of our struggle? We could not be dishonest with ourselves, nor with the youth of our nation. How could we justify the cessation of our fight? In very truth the political situation required an intensification of the struggle... No, we could not accept the Jewish Agency's ultimatum (To desist from independently conceived actions).



Menachem Begin

The Iron Wall
1933

"... We cannot offer any adequate compensation to the Palestinian Arabs in return for Palestine. And, therefore, there is no likelihood of any voluntary agreement being reached. So that all those who regard such an agreement as a condition "sine qua non" for Zionism may as well say "non" and withdraw from Zionism. Zionist colonization must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population.

Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population - behind an iron wall which the native population cannot breach.

That is our Arab policy; not what it should be, but what it actually is, whether we admit it or not. What need, otherwise, of the Balfour Declaration? Or of the Mandate? Their value to us is that an outside power has undertaken to create in the country such conditions of administration and security that if the native population should desire to hinder our work, they will find it impossible...



Symbol of Etzel showing both sides of
the Jordan

Selections on Arab Question
1929-31

There are amongst us many people who, despite all the evidence, incorrectly evaluated the Arab nationalist movement. There are even those who refuse to admit its very existence. Even today there are many who ignore the fact that there is a growing cadre of young, well-educated Arab nationalists. But even those who recognize all these facts should not fall victim to a dangerous misjudgment of the Arab movement. Plans for war and peace cannot be based on fleeting impressions; they must be built on the basis of clear-sighted analysis of the balance of forces at work in the region...

Our task today is to make two things absolutely clear to the Arab nationalist movement. One, the yishuv is already so firmly established that there is no possible way that they can militarily endanger its existence or prevent the realization of the basic goals of Zionism. Two, we cannot be forced to accept any political demands which would endanger us...

The answer to the problem will not be found either by way of the British bayonet nor by surrender of our basic rights. It is necessary to search for a programme of mutual compromise as befits the two peoples living together in Palestine...

Once again we find ourselves in a period of tension and rumours; a period not conducive to political programmes. Many people tend to think that there is no point in continuing our efforts toward a peaceful compromise of the Arab-Jewish conflict. Many people say that there is no hope that the Arab leaders will be prepared to accept an agreement any time in the near future. I tend to disagree. In the economic sense, the yishuv has gained strength in the past two years. Weakening the yishuv will cause damage to any Arabs whose interests lie in the direction of economic development. I am sure that there are many Arabs - even those who would never dare to admit it - who understand these facts. Therefore, I believe that the day is not far off when the Arabs, as a result of their appreciation of their own economic interests, will recognize that political compromise is necessary for the future of both peoples.



MOSHE DAYAN

Eulogy for Roei (1956)

Yesterday at dawn Roei was murdered. The quiet spring morning lulled him and he never saw those who waited in ambush. But the blame lies not with the murderers. Eight long years they sit in the refugee camps in Gaza watching as we occupy their land - the land of their forefathers.

We can't blame the Arabs of Gaza for Roei's death, we can only blame ourselves, we are to blame because we closed our eyes to the cruel reality; we did not want to understand our destiny. Have we forgotten that the youth who came here to settle Nachal Oz guard us from a horrible fate? In Gaza there are hundreds of thousands who watch and pray for the least sign of weakness so that they may tear us to pieces. Have we forgotten that? We must know that in order to avoid that fate, in order to frustrate their hopes of destruction, we must always, day and night, stand guard, armed to the teeth. We are a generation of settlers but without the gun and cannon we will not be able to plant a single tree or build a single house. Our children will have no future if we don't dig bunkers. We can't pave a road or drill a well without barbed wire and machine guns at our side. The millions of Jews who perished because they had no land, command us to settle and build a nation. But just beyond the barbed wire is a sea of hatred and revenge. They are waiting for that day when comfort and serenity will lull us into unawareness. They are waiting for us to take note and obey the ambassadors of hypocrisy who urge us to lay down our arms.

The spirit of Roei cries out to us from his torn body. It cries out that Jewish blood not be taken in vain. Yesterday Jewish blood flowed again. Today we take stock of ourselves. Let us not fear to see the hatred and animosity that surrounds us waiting for the chance to overwhelm us.

Let us guard our awareness lest we be caught in a weak moment. This is our destiny. Our fate is this: either we stand eternally armed, strong and unbending, or we weaken our grip on our swords and face destruction.

Roei Rotenberg, the lean blond youth, came from Tel-Aviv to build his home at the gates of Gaza in order to guard us. But his yearning for peace blinded him to the murderers lying in ambush. His destiny was fulfilled here - death at the gates of Gaza.



Moshe Dayan

YIGAL ALLON

Excerpt from "The Curtain of Sand" (1957)

The state of Israel is not in danger of military defeat, due to the new geopolitical reality, the professional military ability of Tzahal and the fighting spirit of the entire nation. Israel is capable of defeating all the Arab states and destroying all their armies. From an objective point of view, the conditions now exist which may allow the Arabs to free themselves from their illusions of victory over Israel. Their ability to free themselves from illusion is a step toward understanding. The next step after that is peace.

The Arab states do not really have a unified approach towards Israel. Amongst them are those who seek to renew the fighting. But there are also those who seek peace even if only in desperation. Despite the violence inherent in the official communique of Arab summit meetings and despite the anti-Israel propaganda which comprises the text of Arab leaders' speeches, Israel must never despair of peace or refrain from actively seeking it. To despair of peace is to admit defeat and to hand over the victory to the most militaristic, aggressive elements in the Arab world. Peace will not materialize suddenly out of thin air. But the despair of peace will lead to weakness. It might even lead to negligence in the exploitation of opportunities for the achievement of peace - opportunities which may arise in the future. There is no contradiction between an active peace policy and military preparedness. In fact, the greater the desire for peace and the larger its influence on military policy, the more effective and efficient that policy will be.



Yigal Allon

Y. TRUMPELDOR

A letter on Zionism and Socialism

Both you and B. think that I am more of a communist than a Zionist. If I came to consider this question, I would surely arrive at the opposite conclusion. However, I shall not deal with it. I am both one and the other. It is not only that I find no internal conflict between Zionism and communism, but that I have realized that such a conflict shall not occur in the future. Just as I cannot imagine that the day will come when I will reconcile myself to the existing capitalist regime, so too, I cannot imagine myself making peace with the status quo, of slaves dependent on their masters' will, i.e. of the Jewish people. Thus, my heart aches within me, and the recognition of the value of man cries out inside me, from the depths, both when my eyes behold my Jewish brother, humiliated and despised, and when I see man satisfied, his flesh fattened with the pleasures of life, widening the borders of his conquest and authority, and mocking with a poisonous joy the oppressed, the mournful, the hungry. Why do you counterpose one against the other? Why do you desire to find out which is in me more - the communist or the Zionist? To me, now, being a communist means being a human being. Have you ever asked yourself, "What am I more: A man or a Zionist?" There is no way to formulate this question, Liza. And if, nevertheless, I say that there is in me more of the Zionist than of the communist, it is because I really think that failure and collapse are more possible on the communist path than on the Zionist. I imagine that it is not possible to foresee all the details; it may be that the people who will come to perform the necessary task will be incapable of succeeding, and there shall be a need to pass from the commune to some other form (to a cooperative, for example).

I am not about to prove that I am a Zionist. I did this already, at great length, in the letter that was lost, and I cannot here reproduce all the proofs. It is a difficult question, and somewhat insulting; yet, I must note, that for some reason this is how I seem to you and B., and to all the Zionists, and to the communists even more than to the Zionists. The reason is that to Zionists, who do not need preaching on the Zionist idea, I speak incessantly about the communist life-style; while to non-Zionists imbued with the spirit of communism, I speak exclusively of Zionism. It is accepted that one should try to instill in the hearts of men that understanding which they do not already have, and therefore I am more communist in the eyes of the Zionist, and in the eyes of non-Zionists imbued with the communist spirit, I am more Zionist. And, in truth, I am both.

There was doubt in my mind too. Perhaps it is still there and awakens at times. It is not that I am skeptical of communism or Zionism; in some basic principles I can never be absolutely sure, I am unsure of man's capability to act out his ideas. I wrote about this in the long letter which was lost, and I have no desire to return to it, to rewrite it. But, and this is most important, at the moment I am about to act, my doubts disappear. At that moment it is forbidden for one to entertain doubt, for then all will fall apart and be lost. My soul has absorbed the splendor of the Caucasian mountains, and my eyes have beheld the limitless expanse of the sea, and these have granted me the strength to conquer this nagging doubt, this weakness.

I have loved beauty and splendor very much. If I have chosen life, then my life must be filled with beauty and generosity. The chains of economic slavery, which weigh so heavily in the existing capitalist structure, do not allow me to live. It is hard for me in these cities, with their plethora of life-style, artificial, and regulated by law. Under capitalism, there are no true "friends", nor can there ever be. If a morsel of bread, or an "ownerless" small gold coin, be placed between them tomorrow, today's friends shall slay each other.

I have, Liza, a strong character, but believe me, I cringe every time the cursed thought comes to mind that my whole life can pass by within the capitalist system. My soul will thirst for love, thirst for friendship, thirst for a glance of light, a hand's caress, and in place of all these, I will have to curse and shout at every man who puts his hand on "my" property. Very slowly, I will get used to watching, quietly, how the wretched and deprived cringe before my eyes in terrible, hungry pain; with satisfied eyes, desolate from satiation, and exhausted and weary. I will look on them, as if I myself stole their piece of bread.



Yosef Trumpeldor

Excerpts from: "The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution"

1944

"... What, therefore, is the meaning of our contemporary Jewish revolution - this revolt against destiny which the vanguard of the Jewish national renaissance has been cultivating in this country for the last three generations? Our entire history in the Galut has represented a resistance of fate - what, therefore, is new in the content of our contemporary revolution? There is one fundamental difference! In the Galut the Jewish people knew the courage of non-surrender, even in the face of the noose and the auto-da-fe, even, as in our day, in the face of being buried alive by the tens of thousands. But the makers of the contemporary Jewish revolution have asserted: Resisting fate is not enough. We must master our fate; we must take our destiny into our own hands! This is the doctrine of the Jewish revolution - not non-surrender to the Galut but making an end of it.

Galut means dependence - material, political, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual dependence - because we are aliens, a minority, bereft of a homeland, rootless and separated from the soil, from labour, and from basic industry. Our task is to break radically with this dependence and to become masters of our own fate - in a word, to achieve independence. To have survived in the Galut despite all odds is not enough; we must create, by our own effort, the necessary conditions for our future survival as a free and independent people.

The meaning of the Jewish revolution is contained in one word - independence! Independence for the Jewish people in its homeland! Dependence is not merely political or economic; it is also moral, cultural and intellectual, and it affects every limb and nerve of the body, every conscious and subconscious act. Independence, too, means more than political and economic freedom, it involves also the spiritual, moral and intellectual realms, and, in essence, it is independence in the heart, in sentiment, and in will. From this inner sense of freedom outer forms of independence will develop in our way of life, social organization, relations with other people, and economic structure. Our independence will be shaped further by the conquest of labour and the land, by broadening the range of our language and its culture, by perfecting the methods of self-government and self-defence, by creating the framework and conditions for national independence and creativity, and finally - by attaining political independence. This is the essence of the Jewish revolution...

Yaacov Hazan, 81 years old, is a founder of Hashomer Hatzair. He made aliyah in 1923, and has lived in Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek since then.

Q: Yaacov Hazan, you are a man who has led one of the major camps in Zionism for more than fifty years. Are you aware of the process of dissolution in our society today?

A: In my opinion, there has been a significant change in the social texture of the Jewish society here and we haven't been sufficiently aware of the change. But I don't mean any change which has begun in the last few years. The truth is that the Holocaust caused a revolutionary change in the nature of the Jewish people. We talk about remembering the Holocaust.

The word "remember" places that emphasis on the past. The Holocaust was and is no more. But I say that this is basically incorrect. The Holocaust does not belong to the past; it is with us to this very day. I don't mean the Jewish people as a whole or the survivors. Hitler did not succeed in destroying the Jewish people but he did change its nature. He did not cut off one large branch from the Jewish trunk. He sundered the ancient tree of our national life from its top to its deepest roots. The Jewish people after Hitler is not the same Jewish people which existed before the Holocaust. But while this tragedy and turbulence was going on, we continued to build the Zionist enterprise even though the agent of this enterprise was a different people. European Jewry disappeared, and with it the halutzic movement. In Poland alone there was an organized chalutzic movement of 100,000 chaverim. A few hundred of them remained alive after the Holocaust. Oriental Jewry, those from the Arab countries, became the primary agents of Zionist realization. But these communities had virtually no halutzic cadres. While there were fine halutzic movements in Tunis, Egypt and Iraq, they were small movements which could have no effect on a mass immigration. The strong halutzic cadre around which any mass immigration organizes simply did not exist.

Q: What was the principal contribution of the Second and Third aliyah?

A: The Second Aliyah always seemed to me to be like a volcano continually spouting ideas, thoughts and dreams about the future of Zionism. They dreamed and also built. In fact, everything that has been built in this country by the labour movement has its basis in ideas and dreams of the Second and Third Aliyah.

I, like everyone, knew personally almost the entire "working class" of that time. I don't think there were even 20,000 members in the Histadrut when I made aliyah. And since there were no cars and the roads were bad, we walked throughout the land and met each other. A large workers family. In Palestine there were 70,000 Jews. 35,000 had come here to die and 35,000 Jewish youth had come to live in this land. This was a very special labour movement. Lenin said: "When does the revolution begin? The revolution begins when the enraged masses join the groups of revolutionary intellectuals. It is like a riverbed which directs flood waters seeking a course. It is like boiling water which turns to tea only when you add the leaves."

In Palestine there were only the tea leaves on the dry riverbed which must be prepared to absorb the rushing water to come. The masses of working people did not yet exist. Only the leaves - the young revolutionary intellectuals. In other countries, such a group would have been a tiny minority amongst the proletarian masses. Here we were the working class itself.

After the Holocaust and during the mass immigration from the Arab world, and the saving of the remains of European Jewry, the situation changed. This was the beginning of the crisis. But we didn't understand that we were dealing with a different people with different problems.

Q: You are saying that the Zionist movement and the Jewish society here have not adjusted to the situation and haven't developed new tools?

A: Yes, we haven't developed tools and we haven't retranslated the ideas of previous aliyot to the language of the new immigration. I'll give you an example. We can't continue talking about the "religion of labour". For the first time we're dealing with Jewish masses who entered into agriculture, industry and construction, because it was a natural thing to do - because it was a condition of existence. No Zionist-nationalist mission. Nothing to do with A.D. Gordon. Simply the normal reality of any working people. Here we faced a new kind of situation. How do you turn "normal" working class into an agent of national renaissance? How will this working class contribute to an independent working economy? How will he participate in running that economy? We continued our usual way of life (unusual in itself) without worrying about making all this understandable to the new masses.

Q: This is your explanation for the gap between Zionist rhetoric and reality?

A: For the leadership of the movement this wasn't rhetoric. This was the life blood. And we managed to absorb the immigrants against all odds. But in terms of ideology we failed. We believed in our vision but the new masses understood it as only empty rhetoric. But something even worse happened. This aliyah brought a treasure of culture and traditions - a rich web of family and community relationships. All this was destroyed here.

This aliyah was confused, unsure of itself and oppressed with an inferiority complex in relation to the veteran Ashkenazi community here. And what did we offer them in place of a social fabric going to pieces? Only a debauched street culture and shreds of decaying Western bourgeois culture.

The Other Man

The voice on the phone wasn't young. It wasn't old either, just tired. Slow and tired. The man called me Aharon as if we were old friends and said, "Do you have a minute?" I asked him his name, but he answered, "It doesn't matter. You don't know me." After a moment he continued, "Look, I read your article about that Hungarian fellow, the one in the moshav in the Negev. What's his name?" "Yosef." Yes, Yosef. He has some interesting ideas... but it's utopia. It's all just utopia. He doesn't suggest how to carry them out. Do you understand what I mean?" I didn't understand. I couldn't figure out what he wanted. I asked, "Do you want to give your opinion? To argue with him?" Silence. I thought he had hung up. I called out, but he suddenly said, "I'm still here. You don't have to shout." "Do you want to meet," I asked. Again, silence. "Do you ever come to Jeruslaem?" he answered, "Sometimes." O.K. Come and see me. We'll talk." "Should I call first?" No, I'll be home," he said and gave me directions to his house. No problem. He lived in a village just outside the city.

I visited him the next evening. He lived in a one-story stone house. An old Arab house with two tall pine trees and some bushes in front. When he opened the door, I was sure that I knew him from someplace, sometime. Tall and straight, as if his spine was a rod of inflexible steel. A moustache and a high forehead and greying hair. But the most impressive thing were his eyes - blue, deep blue. And in them you saw sorrow and fatigue.

"Have we met before?" I asked.

"Probably. This was a small country, once. Probably. Kfar Saba junction. Hadera junction. How many were there altogether? Maybe at some meeting..."

His living room was decorated with some coloured tile in strange geometrical shapes. A shabby, threadbare rug, a couch, two chairs. The bookcase was made out of red bricks; the shelves were filled with Hebrew books: nature, geography, archaeology, the collected works of those who once symbolized the best in the labour movement, some fine literature. A room full of loneliness and isolation.

I'll call him "Abram" because at the end of the discussion he asked me not to print his name. "What difference does it make who I am? What's the difference?" (And I said to myself: What irony! The world has turned upside down! The few people left from that "other Israel" have gone underground and are afraid or embarrassed to reveal themselves. But the new "underworld" has risen to the top. Their names are known, published, famous and respectable.)

I asked him what he did for a living. "Forestry," he said.

"Forest ranger?"

"No, I supervise the work here in the area. There are a lot of forests. Will you dirnk something? I only have some cognac - Araq 777. Do you still drink that?"

"O.K."

He put the glasses on the low table and while he poured, asked, "Do you see Yigal Allon sometimes?" "Infrequently," I answered. He didn't continue. I felt some bitterness within him.

(How do I know him? From where? And I rack my memory thinking of places far away and times long ago, meetings, conventions... Maybe it's only the "type" that I know?)

"That Hungarian," he finally said, "he's interesting... I mean it's interesting that there are people like that. Nonconformists. People who think independently. Usually people in this country "think like something." Like Mapai, like Mapam, like Herut, Gush Emunim, Shalom Achshav... I listen to people at work. All that I hear is a rehash of what was written in yesterday's newspaper or what was said on the radio... I don't have a television but it's probably the same there. It's insulting!"

"Why insulting?"

"It's insulting when someone asks you: Did you read what X wrote yesterday (he mentioned the name of a famous newspaperman), or did you hear what they said on TV?... Everyone assumes that everyone else is the same, does and thinks the same. They are sure, that you also... Once we were famous for our originality; now we're just a bunch of parrots. Parroting each other. And they want me to be like that too! But I want to be the black sheep! You know what? I know a guy here, an American. He gets up every morning at 4:00 and runs twenty kilometres, from here to Ramat Rachel and back. I admire him. Not because he's such a fine athlete but because he does something that few others do. Not meditation! Everybody meditates today. Your Hungarian is like that - that is, a nonconformist. Living there on that moshav and wanting to earn less; not more, but less! But when it comes to his practical suggestions, well..."

But I want to hear about him, his origins, his life.

"Forget it! What does it matter? Jew. Sabra. Just as you see me. I was born here, third generation. I've been here and there..."

I coax him. He doesn't like to talk. He prefers to keep it all buried inside. He's like a man who doesn't want to remember his old lover and their parting. He speaks jerkily, hesitantly but gradually it all comes out. He mentions names, many names. He seems to know everybody. Some he hasn't seen in over twenty years but feels he still has ties with them. It's interesting how he remembers them as they were. He believes in and guards symbols that were, but whose meaning are lost today. Here and there, piece by piece, his life story unfolds - a life of beginning but no conclusions. Avram was born in Rehovot, studied in an agricultural school and joined a kibbutz. He left after a year or so and enlisted in the British Army during World War II. Served in North Africa.

"By the way, what's with Benkover? Do you see him?"

"Benkover! He died over a year ago. You didn't know?"

"Benkover, dead?" He fell silent. "I don't read the papers," he finally said. "I mean, not regularly. I only saw your article by chance. Someone brought it to me." He fell silent again, and then, after a moment, continued, "He was my platoon sergeant, Benkover. A great guy. A clown but energetic. All heart..."

After the war he went to the university in Jerusalem and studied philosophy under Hugo Bergman. Why philosophy? So that he could find some answers to the questions that arose in the deserts of North Africa, the hills of Italy and later, in Germany. But along comes the War of Independence and there's no more time for philosophy. He joined the Palmach and fought in the campaign to open the road to Jerusalem and in the attempt to conquer the Old City. He was wounded in the

battle on Mt. Zion and was hospitalized for several weeks. He returned to Rehovot for a year. Then, when the first settlements were established in the Jerusalem Corridor, he went there as an agricultural advisor. That's when he fell in love with the forests that were being planted then. But that ends too. The Ministry of Agriculture sent him to Africa to teach the natives. He wandered throughout the world, returned to Israel and, instead of continuing his work, joins the archaeological expeditions to the Dead Sea region, "I didn't find it," he says.

"What didn't you find?"

There is a crisis. For a year he does nothing but read books. History and philosophy. Then he returned to the forests.

That, in short, is Avram's life story. It's a life full of starts and involvements. Involvement with the kibbutz, with the Palmach, with the university, with several professions. But nothing permanent. He also had some involvement with politics, once. He would go to party meetings and interject comments, but no one ever reacted. He's been silent now for many years. Tired.

He pours me some more cognac and asks, "Do you have any influence?"

I laugh. I explain that journalists like to think that they have influence. It's a sort of self delusion that helps one grind out the next article. But practically speaking? Do we influence policymakers? Hah!

He sits in his chair and looks at me, one long finger resting on his right temple and another on his cheek. I say to myself: he's probably thinking that if there's no influence, then there's no reason to go on.

I decide to try, in any case, to coax him back to his original statement, to the original purpose of my visit.

"Look, he says, "the Jewish people aren't a handsome people, right? We know it. That bastard, Kreisky once called us 'ugly people'. You wrote about it. (Ah, so he does read newspapers!) Kreisky is a bastard not because it isn't true, but because you don't have to talk about it in public like that. He himself is one of the ugliest of us all. But, well, it's an old story... I was in Europe in 1958, in Belgium, France, England. I saw the Jews. Crafty, sharp-witted, shrewd. Always pushing, ambitious. So ambitious. There's no innocence, no idealism. Jews aren't idealists. We all know that. There are reasons, of course, objective historical reasons; but the fact remains: an ugly people."

He paused, and when he began again, I was startled by his voice. All the tiredness was gone and he roared at me:

"Where is the labour movement?! Where? You know what the labour movement wanted? It wanted to create a different, better people. And it succeeded for forty, fifty years. It was miraculous! Despite all our history. The labour movement erased all that was ugly and made something new - a real miracle. Don't you remember? Think of our youth. We were young, and innocent and idealistic. We talked about the dignity of labour - and we meant it! We talked about socialism - and we meant it! We talked about settlement - and meant it! Without craft, without shrewdness. Where is the labour movement today, I ask you? Where?"

His voice was stunning. His words echoed in my ears. Outside, beyond the small room, there was silence. A moth fluttered around the bare lightbulb hanging from the ceiling. And then he continued, but in a calmer tone.

"Tell me, what's the difference between Mapai and the Revisionists?"

I remind him that he is being anachronistic.

"O.K. What's the difference between the Labour Party and the Likud? Their positions? For and against compromises? For these borders or those borders? The Allon Plan or the Sharon Plan? But even that's not true. Because in every party there are the same positions, the same arguments. The positions change from day to day according to the situation. But the labour movement was not a movement of positions or platforms. It was a movement of action - a movement that wanted to change the nature of society and the nature of the Jewish people. And the movement changed us, you see. But what's left of it all? Nothing. And if that is so, then what use is the Labour Party or Mapam? What good are they today? They're worth less than even the European socialist parties. At least there they want to try to mend the worst features of the system - to nationalize some basic industries, to improve welfare services, to make the welfare state a little more bearable to live in. Here, not even that. They call themselves "socialist Zionist" parties. What's socialist about them? How is their Zionism different from that of any other party?"

I ask him the inevitable, banal, journalist's question: What does he suggest? What does he want?

"Vision! Ideals!" he shouted. "Not positions but ideals! Begin has an ideal. It's not my ideal, but at least it's an ideal. The Third Jewish Commonwealth complete with rebuilt Temple and Jews living everywhere in Judea and Samaria. What is the ideal of the Labour Party? Does it have a vision of a different kind of society? And if there is an ideal, one that I haven't heard of, then what is being done to realize the ideal? If there is an ideal, then when we return to power, we have to turn the country upside down. Change everything. Get rid of all the leeches and parasites. Wipe out the underworld of speculators and confidence men who make up the elite of today's society. It's so awful, what's happened, what's going on. Do you see? Do you understand?"

His voice choked and tears appeared in his eyes.

"Listen. It can't go on this way much longer. We'll be such an ugly people. So ugly. And if so - what's the point?"

After a moment of silence he says, "I talked. Now you write. Maybe someone will read it and understand. But probably not..."